



The Role of Education in Reconciliation

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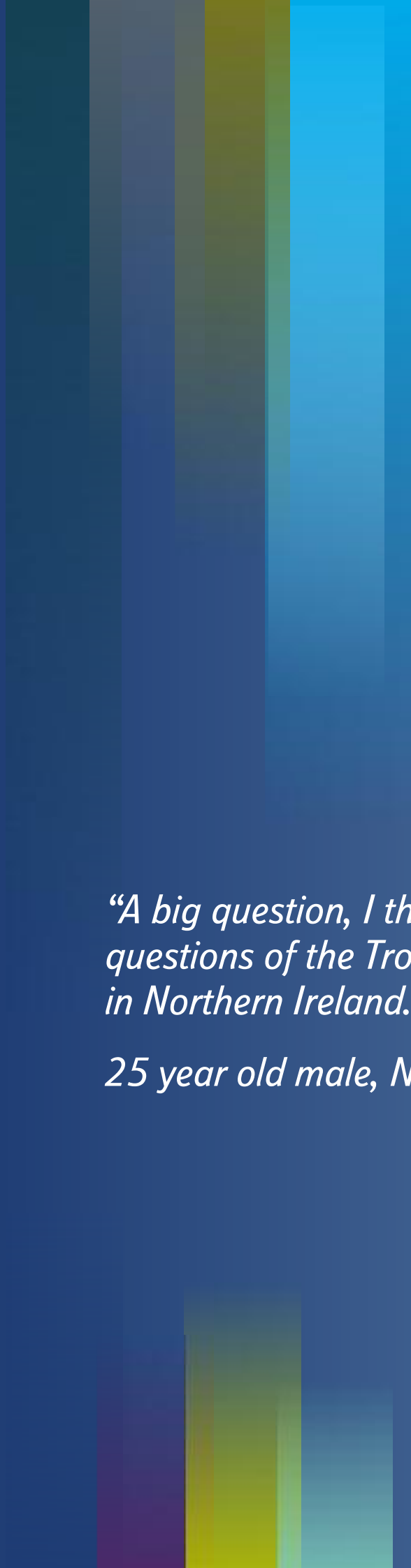
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The Role of Education in Reconciliation

The Perspectives of Children and Young People in Bosnia and Herzegovina
and Northern Ireland



“A big question, I think, particularly now, is how are questions of the Troubles going to be taught in schools in Northern Ireland.”

25 year old male, Northern Ireland



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This study highlights the important role that education can play in helping children and young people both to understand the violent past and to contribute to a shared and more peaceful future in societies emerging from conflict. In both Northern Ireland and Bosnia and Herzegovina, interviews were conducted with 24-25 year olds, 16-18 year olds and eleven year olds. The findings from this study provide insight into the experiences and perspectives of children and young people in both regions with regard to the role of education in reconciliation.

Findings

1. Experience of conflict

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the key themes emerging related to children and young people's experiences of the 1992-1995 war were the impact of displacement, separation and fear. There were significant experiential differences in relation to children and young people's experiences of the war depending upon whether they remained in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the war or were displaced, internally or externally, as a result of the war.

With regard to children and young people's experiences of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, there were significant experiential differences depending on two main factors, namely where respondents lived and what their parents' relationship was to the conflict (for example, if they were involved in the army or police service, if they were ex-prisoners, etc.).

Unlike in Bosnia and Herzegovina where only the oldest respondents (24-25 age group) had clear memories of the war, experience of the Troubles in Northern Ireland was not limited to any one age group.

2. Impact of conflict on schooling

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, children and young people's schooling was hugely disrupted by the war. For some respondents, schooling stopped altogether for a period of weeks or months. Other respondents were forced to change school, often multiple times, as a result of being displaced – internally, within Bosnia and

Herzegovina, or externally, for example to Croatia or Germany. The interview transcripts also highlight the challenges for refugee children in being accepted when relocated to other areas.

In Northern Ireland, the impact of the conflict on schooling was much less obvious, but was nevertheless apparent. School uniforms and particular sporting equipment, for example camogie sticks, were seen as clearly identifying young people as Catholic or Protestant, and therefore exposing them to the threat of sectarian bullying and intimidation. Some respondents had themselves witnessed or experienced such bullying.

3. Understanding of the Troubles in Northern Ireland/war in Bosnia and Herzegovina

In general, respondents in both Northern Ireland and Bosnia and Herzegovina struggled to explain the conflict in their region. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, nationalist aggression and a desire for independence were the most frequently cited reasons for the war. In Northern Ireland, the picture was less clear, with respondents citing a combination of political, religious and historic roots of the conflict. In both regions, respondents described the conflict using terms such as “stupid”, “absurd” and “shameful”.

In both regions, respondents in the oldest age group tended to have the most sophisticated understanding of the causes of the conflict. The eleven year olds in both regions were least sure about the causes of the conflict. The majority of the eleven year olds interviewed in Northern Ireland believed that the Troubles were caused by religion.

4. Sources of awareness and understanding of conflict

In both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Northern Ireland, children and young people’s main sources of information about the war/Troubles were:

- Adults (parents, grandparents, teachers);
- Personal experience (depending on age);
- Media;
- School (subjects such as History, Religion, Politics, Personal Development).

Very few respondents reported discussing the conflict with their friends. In Northern Ireland, respondents also suggested that the physical surroundings in which children and young people grow up have an impact on their awareness, knowledge and understanding of the Troubles.

It is clear from respondents’ responses that for many people in Bosnia and Herzegovina the war remains a difficult, often painful topic of conversation.

In Northern Ireland, the majority of respondents in the 24-25 age group believed that the Troubles were not adequately addressed when they were at school.

5. What do young people say about reconciliation?

The young people interviewed had strong views about the concept of reconciliation. The issues that they seemed most animated about with regard to the concept were building relationships and dealing with the past.

The 24-25 year olds interviewed in Northern Ireland seemed to have very developed ideas about dealing with the past in their society and the problems inherent in it (e.g. justice, victimhood, memorialisation). Dealing with the past was an important issue to the young people interviewed in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but given the impact of the war and political instability, they felt that 'talking about the past' was the first step to reconciliation.

The eleven year olds interviewed in Northern Ireland seemed to have a very limited knowledge of political issues in the society. In contrast, this age group had fairly sophisticated views in Bosnia and Herzegovina, recognising at their young age, for example, the way the political structures limit possibilities for reconciliation and that the war still has a legacy.

Respondents seemed to understand the values implicit in reconciliation processes. This raises questions about education aimed at reconciliation. Arguably it should focus on practical ways of building relationships and dealing with difficult situations rather than the transmission of values.

Economic insecurity, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina, was seen by young people as a major impediment to building a lasting peace and reconciliation.

The young people interviewed felt they had a responsibility to build reconciliation and wanted a voice in debates about it, but equally, felt very strongly that politicians should lead such processes and currently, in both societies,

they feel politicians perpetuate division rather than help overcome it.

6. The role of education in reconciliation

Despite a number of qualifications, there was broad agreement among respondents in both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Northern Ireland that reconciliation - in particular, the issue of dealing with the past - should be addressed directly in schools.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, respondents tended to emphasise the need for contact between schools with pupils of different ethnicities/nationalities, for example through school exchanges. By contrast, in Northern Ireland respondents pointed to the need for schools to be more mixed.

The use of interactive teaching methodologies and multiple teaching and learning resources was recommended by respondents in both regions in order to make learning about the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Troubles in Northern Ireland more interesting. Inviting guest speakers and taking pupils on visits to war/conflict-affected areas were also seen as potentially beneficial.

There was consensus among respondents that their recommendations had implications for teacher education as well as for youth work provision. Particularly in Northern Ireland, it was felt that more partnership between teachers and youth workers in addressing sensitive conflict and reconciliation-related issues with children and young people.

Specific Recommendations

The education system in Northern Ireland is in the midst of significant structural and curricular change. Prior to a common curriculum NI had also adopted an educational policy position in relation to the conflict (DE Circular 1982/21) which stated that all teachers had a responsibility to contribute towards the improvement of community relations. This policy was translated into practice through Education for Mutual Understanding as a cross-curricular theme in the 1980s and 1990s and through cross-community contact programmes. With the advent of the statutory curriculum in 1989, common programmes were also adopted for the teaching of History and Religious Education (R.E.) and, most recently, Education for Local and Global Citizenship, which is conceptually grounded in universal human rights and responsibilities.

In the years following the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement (1998), control of education has been devolved to a new Northern Ireland Assembly with a locally elected Minister of Education and a Northern Ireland Assembly Education Committee. A Review of Public Administration (RPA) means that a new, single Education and Skills Authority (ESA) will finally be established from January 2010. This will bring together many of the former responsibilities of local Education and Library Boards and curriculum authorities. Educators are also awaiting the outcome of a review of teacher education. Alongside these structural changes, there has been a long-running debate leading to the ending of academic selection at age eleven and considerable uncertainty about arrangements for the future transfer of children

from primary to post-primary school. This has meant that other education issues have received less attention in recent times.

Nevertheless, significant progress has been made towards the introduction of a new Northern Ireland curriculum which places considerable emphasis on learning outcomes and skills. The new curriculum framework includes a number of potential opportunities for the inclusion of teaching and learning related to the Troubles as part of the recent history of Northern Ireland. For example, one of the main aims of the revised curriculum is to “develop the young person as a contributor to society”. This is partly facilitated through the inclusion of **Local and Global Citizenship** as an area of ‘Learning for Life and Work’. At primary level, this opens up opportunities to build a stronger commitment to human rights values and practices from an early age. At post-primary level, the Local and Global Citizenship curriculum explicitly mentions that pupils should have opportunities to:

“Investigate how and why conflict, including prejudice, stereotyping, sectarianism and racism may arise in the community. Investigate ways of managing conflict and promoting community relations and reconciliation.”

The **citizenship** framework also includes opportunities to examine key human rights commitments and investigate ways of strengthening democratic participation as an alternative to violence.

A range of subject areas also have distinctive contributions to make. For example, the statutory requirements for **History** at Key Stage 3 requires

that pupils aged 11-14 have opportunities to:

“...investigate the long and short term causes and consequences of the partition of Ireland and how it has influenced Northern Ireland today, including key events and turning points.”

Opportunities also exist through the inclusion of texts related to the Troubles as part of the English curriculum. The statutory requirements for **English** and **Media Education** at Key Stage 3 indicate that pupils should have opportunities to:

“...use literature, drama, poetry or the moving image to explore others’ needs and rights, for example, participate in a role play involving conflicting rights.”

The statutory requirements for **Religious Education** in Northern Ireland are drawn up by the four main Christian Churches. However, non-statutory guidance has been developed for RE teachers at Key Stage 3 so that they can see how the Church developed requirements blend with the broader aims, objectives and key elements of the curriculum. These guidelines include recommendations that pupils aged 11-14 have opportunities to:

“...investigate how choices can be influenced by prejudice and sectarianism and ways in which reconciliation can be achieved through dialogue, outreach and action, for example, the churches’ role in peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland or South Africa; religious response to social justice issues in today’s world.”

Meanwhile in the youth work sector (both statutory and voluntary), the ‘Model for Effective

Practice’ is underpinned by the principles of equity, diversity and interdependence and supports meaningful cross-community engagement between young people and a commitment to active citizenship.

Another important educational development in Northern Ireland is a current review of the Department of Education (DE) Community Relations Strategy. This may provide an opportunity to consider new forms of support for schools, teachers and pupils in engaging directly with the legacy of the Troubles and issues related to reconciliation.

A particularly valuable contribution to support for this will be made by the announcement of funding through the European Union’s Peace and Reconciliation Programme (PEACE III, Measure 1.2, Strand 1) which invited applications for projects that “explore the legacy and memory of the conflict through truth recovery, documentation, story telling and the recording of complex history and experience”. The call indicated that these may include: television and broadcasting materials; interactive web-based resources; archiving; exhibitions; and educational materials, including training and support for teachers, youth workers and community workers.

The Report of the Consultative Group on the Past has highlighted the need for much more widespread debate on dealing with the past in Northern Ireland. It is clear that both formal and informal education have a key role to play. The education authorities need to provide leadership in initiating this debate within the education community.

In light of these overall developments, the following are a number of concrete recommendations.

1. The role of education in dealing with the past and contributing to societal reconciliation should be discussed by the Northern Ireland Assembly Education Committee and a position paper issued for consultation, including consultation with children and young people.
2. This research has highlighted the desire of the children and young people interviewed to learn more about the Troubles and how they might contribute to a more peaceful future. More widespread consultation with children and young people on how this can be achieved in practice needs to take place. This could take the form of more widespread, local consultations through schools and youth groups, perhaps initiated by the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) and/or local youth and children's organisations. These consultations need to engage and involve young people, not only in articulating their views but also in co-creating new ways of dealing with the past and building young people's commitment to human rights principles and practices and democratic values. The views of children and young people on this issue also need to be incorporated into the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister's (OFMDFM) Children and Young People's Strategy.
3. The Department of Education for Northern Ireland should seek the views of school authorities on the role that schools should play in enhancing young people's understanding the Troubles and how they might contribute to a more peaceful future. On the basis of this feedback to this consultation, the Department of Education could issue a Circular with guidance on the expectations from schools.
4. The Department of Education Community Relations branch might ask every school to consider, based on a common set of questions, the role that they can play in helping young people understand the legacy of the recent past and how they might contribute to a more peaceful future. A summary of their recommendations should be collated and circulated to all schools as guidance.
5. The inclusion of this work within the curriculum has significant implications particularly for teachers and teacher educators. Their views need to be sought in a systematic way, for instance through the recently established General Teaching Council (GTCNI) and/or the teaching trade unions.
6. History teachers need to be consulted about whether or not any further revisions need to take place to the Northern Ireland History curriculum, for example, if there needs to be a specific statutory requirement to focus on the history of the Troubles, even though this is implied in the current requirements.

7. The views of primary teachers should also be sought as to whether history of this kind should be introduced at Key Stage 2.
8. The new Education and Skills Authority (ESA) needs to give thought to the provision of in-service education for teachers. Some teachers have benefited from professional development in relation to the teaching of Local and Global Citizenship. This needs to be refreshed and provision made for helping a wider group of teachers, such as English, History and R.E. teachers to address issues of reconciliation in the classroom.
9. The new ESA will be responsible for providing curriculum support. Television and media have been particularly active in developing user-friendly resources related to Education for Mutual Understanding, History teaching and citizenship education. The Department of Education and the new ESA should continue to be represented on the advisory councils of educational television providers to explore whether new and targeted resources might be required. Similarly, DE and ESA could convene a meeting of educational publishers to consider whether age-appropriate, retrospective texts related to the Troubles need to be developed for use by schools (for example, in the way that the Peruvian authorities have done following the Truth and Reconciliation Commission there).
10. The potentially divisive impact of remembrance and commemoration is of particular concern, particularly within schools with children from diverse social and political backgrounds. Some thought needs to be given to this, as well as to whether field sites, murals, memorials and museums could be educational resources. The potential education role of the proposed Conflict and Reconciliation Centre on the former site of the Maze prison needs to be considered. Thought should be given to its role as a possible field site for schools, residential site or interpretive centre.
11. There may be distinctive concerns amongst those groups representing victims and survivors. These will need to be taken into consideration in bringing any recommendations forward.
12. The views of parents and their expectations of schools in dealing with the Troubles should be sought, for example through a specially commissioned survey or the inclusion of a module in the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey.



2. Acknowledgements

We are particularly grateful to all the children and young people who agreed to participate in this research project and for speaking openly and honestly about their views and experiences regarding education's role in the reconciliation processes taking place in their regions. Thank you, *hvala, gracias, eskerrik asko!* We would also like to thank the teachers, especially the principals and pedagogues, at participating schools in Northern Ireland and Bosnia and Herzegovina for their support and assistance.

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About this Project

The overall purpose of this project was to consult with children, young people and educators in Northern Ireland and Bosnia and Herzegovina to gain deeper insight into their experience and understanding of conflict, its legacies in their region and the implications for the role of education in promoting the concept of reconciliation with different age groups.

The main objectives of this project were to:

- Explore, in a comparative way, education in reconciliation from the perspectives of children, young people and educators;
- Interview children and young people in order to gain a deeper insight into their understanding of the conflict in their region and concept of reconciliation;
- Include, where possible, representation from children with different life histories, including children and young people of those directly affected by or involved in the conflict in their region;
- Investigate what different needs there are from a generational point of view (children and young people who have lived through conflict, children who know only the post-conflict context), and the extent to which understandings of reconciliation differ across different age-groups (primary, post-primary and young adults);
- Consult with educators (primary school teachers, secondary school teachers and youth workers/adult educators), based on the lessons learned, and produce recommendations for future practice on the contribution of education to reconciliation;
- Share the lessons learned from these interviews and consultations and their implications between regions;
- Produce summary briefings for dissemination to a variety of groups, including policymakers; senior managers in schools, youth, voluntary and community organisations; educators (primary, post-primary, youth, community and adult); and children and young people.

The project had the following **distinctive features**:

- **A focus on children and young people.**

The primary focus for the initiative was on *children and young people*. Whilst previous work such as the Cost of the Troubles Study (Smyth, 1999) has documented the stories of individual children, none have focused explicitly on the concept of reconciliation as perceived by children and young people, yet educators of different age groups in many post-conflict situations are being asked to promote the concept of education for reconciliation. For example, the concept is identified as part of the new statutory programme for Citizenship education in the Northern Ireland Curriculum, but training and guidance with a specific and explicit focus on the concept of reconciliation has not been developed and we know very little about the way in which different age groups perceive and understand this complex concept.

- **Giving voice to the children of specific groups.**

In each region, the initiative involved interviews with children and young people, including some representation from children of victims, survivors and those with direct involvement in (or experience of) the conflict, as well as children from minority ethnic groups.

- **A generational perspective.**

The project raised questions about the experiences and perspectives different generations might have on the conflict and its

legacies in their region. This builds broadly on the work of Donald Shriver (2005), which suggests that the issues and attitudes of post-conflict generations may be very different from those who experienced the conflict. One aspect of peace processes that has been little thought through, is that within a relatively short number of years following a peace agreement, generations of children are born that have no direct experience of the violent conflict that took place within their society. This is already taking place within Northern Ireland and other contexts where there are anecdotal accounts from teachers and teacher educators that many children and student teachers they encounter find it extremely difficult to relate to discussion about the conflict. This is not to say that such ‘post-conflict generations’ are unaware of legacies of the conflict, but suggests that their lack of direct experience of the conflict itself may mean that their understanding of the conflict and motivation to engage with issues arising from it may be different from the generations that lived through the experience.

In more international contexts this challenge may be similar to that of engaging post-war generations of Europeans in understanding the experience and legacies of World War II, yet to a certain extent it could be claimed that the European Union represents an excellent example of post-war reconciliation between peoples and nations. The challenge for educators of different age groups is therefore to gain deeper insight into the perspectives of different generations on the conflict and what this might mean in terms of securing engagement, developing resources and using appropriate working methods to promote reconciliation.

The project took account of this through consultations in each region involving children finishing primary school, young people finishing post-primary schooling, and adults in their early twenties. In Northern Ireland, for example, this represents three distinct ‘generations’: primary school children that were born after the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement of 1998; post-primary school children born around the time of this Agreement; and young adults born and educated whilst the conflict was still taking place. Talking to young people with some direct experience of the conflict in their society as well as the children of the ‘post-conflict’ generation gave us greater insight into these different perspectives.

- **Further development of the conceptual framework for reconciliation.**

The consultations were also framed explicitly around the five strands of the working definition of reconciliation developed by Hamber and Kelly (2005) and subsequently adopted by the PEACE II programme. This represented an excellent opportunity to contribute to the further development of our understanding of the concept of reconciliation by extending the current working definition to include generational perspectives on reconciliation and its relevance across both Northern Ireland and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

- **A comparative, European dimension.**

The initiative, funded under the ‘Outward and Forward Looking Region’ strand of the PEACE II Extension, involved established links with implementing partners in two European regions

that have experienced conflict, namely Bosnia and Herzegovina and Northern Ireland. These regions are at different stages in a longer-term peace process, which means that both are dealing to some extent with legacies of conflict that have some similarities. For example, there are similarities in how best to provide support for victims and support social and economic reconstruction. Both face challenges in terms of the legacies of conflict for existing institutional arrangements and new political structures. From a comparative dimension there is much to be learned from the experiences, perceptions and understandings held by the children of these various groups and both regions have acknowledged that education is a key area for development.

However, there is also much to be learned from the distinctiveness of each context. For example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina the issue of war crimes is still being addressed and there is an emphasis on the experiences of displaced persons and returnees, whilst in Northern Ireland debate is currently emerging about whether there is a need for some form of truth recovery process. A further significant difference is that each region has its own distinctive timeline in terms of its peace process. For example, key dates for the Northern Ireland context include the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the key date is the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement. Each of these sets a different timeframe in defining the ‘post-conflict generation’.

- **Practical outcomes** include documented accounts from three distinct generations of children and young people of their experience and understanding of the conflict in their society. These might form the basis for learning materials in their own right. The research also included consultation meetings involving educators (primary, secondary and teacher/adult educators) in each region. The purpose of these consultations was to explore possibilities and challenges for educators in dealing with the past in each of these societies. The findings from these consultations will be the subject of a separate report.

The project was funded from January 2007 until September 2008 by the European Union's Peace and Reconciliation Programme (PEACE II Extension) under the 'Outward and Forward Looking Region' strand of Measure 2.1 Reconciliation for Sustainable Peace and managed for the Special European Union Programmes Body by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council.

The project was coordinated by the UNESCO Centre, School of Education, University of Ulster. The Centre also undertook the data collection from respondents in Northern Ireland. The project also benefited from the involvement of Dr Brandon Hamber, Director of INCORE, University of Ulster, who provided advice on the conceptual framework for reconciliation and undertook interviews with victims and survivors organisations as well as support organisations, such as ethnic minority support groups.

The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina established a department dedicated to supporting the education reform process in 2002. The Mission is based in Sarajevo with 14 field offices in various parts of the country which provide insight into education provision at community level. The OSCE provided invaluable assistance and advice on partner organisations and data collection. Data collection was carried out by the Education for Peace Institute of the Balkans (EFP-Balkans) which secured access to schools and provided additional expertise in translating interview transcripts from Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian into English.

A Working Definition of Reconciliation

At the heart of this project lies the concept of reconciliation. Specifically, the project sought to outline how young people from the two regions understood the concept. This, it was felt, was crucial if we were to truly understand the role of young people in reconciliation processes and how this then might relate to education.

Reconciliation as a concept, however, is not an easy term to get to grips with and multiple understandings of the term exist (Hamber & Kelly, 2005). To assist with this process the theoretical model developed by Hamber and Kelly was used as a basis for how the issue was approached in the study (Hamber & Kelly, 2004; Hamber & Kelly, 2005; Hamber & Kelly, 2008; Kelly & Hamber, 2005). This definition was developed as part of a research project undertaken in 2003 in Northern Ireland. This research sought to gather the views of community workers and local politicians on how they understood the concept.

As part of the research, Hamber and Kelly constructed a working definition of reconciliation to test with community respondents. Using various sources (ADM/CPA, 2003; Afzali & Colleton, 2003; Assefa, 2001; Bloomfield, Barnes, & Huyse, 2003; Hamber, 2002; Hamber & van der Merwe, 1998; Lederach, 1997; 2002; Porter, 2003; Rigby, 2001; van der Merwe, 1999), and the authors' own experience, a model was developed that has now become known in Northern Ireland as the Five Strand Reconciliation Model. The definition was never intended to be a definitive statement on what reconciliation is or could be, but as a useful,

though imperfect, tool which could provoke a deeper discussion with the many sectors that were the targets of our research.

The Five Strand Reconciliation Model sees reconciliation starting from the premise that attention is required to build peace relationships. Reconciliation is the process of addressing conflictual and fractured relationships and this includes a range of activities. It is a voluntary act that cannot be imposed (Bloomfield, Barnes, & Huyse, 2003). A reconciliation process generally involves five interwoven and related strands.

1. Developing a shared vision:

This entails individuals across the society and at all levels, articulating a common vision of an interdependent, just, equitable and diverse society even if they have different opinions, goals or political beliefs.

2. Acknowledging and dealing with the past:

This entails acknowledging the hurt, losses, truths and suffering of the past, as well as establishing mechanisms to provide for justice, healing, truth, restitution or reparations, and restoration, including apologies if necessary and steps aimed at redress. In addition, individuals and institutions need to acknowledge their own role in the conflicts of the past, accepting and learning from it in a constructive way to guarantee non-repetition.

3. Building positive relationships:

This entails actively building or renewing relationships between individuals, groups or individuals and the state, as well as addressing issues of trust, prejudice and intolerance

between groups and individuals. This results in accepting commonalities and differences, and embracing and engaging with those who are different from us.

4. Significant cultural and attitudinal change:

This entails changing how people relate to, and their attitudes towards, one another. Attention needs to be given to developing a culture of respect for human rights and human difference, creating a context where each citizen becomes an active participant in society and feels a sense of belonging. The result is that a culture of suspicion, fear, mistrust and violence is broken down and opportunities and space opened where people can hear and be heard.

5. Substantial social, economic and political change (equity and equality):

This entails identifying, reconstructing or addressing, and ultimately transforming the social, economic and political structures that caused or contributed to conflict and estrangement. The result is socio-economic and political equality.

Two additional points remain crucial to the holistic understanding of the working definition. Reconciliation, for Hamber and Kelly, is the *process* of addressing these five strands, and not solely about the *outcome* of doing so (Hamber & Kelly, 2005). Reconciliation processes, by their nature, contain paradoxes and tensions, not least because the social, interpersonal and political context is in constant flux. It is neither neat, easy, nor necessarily a linear process. Lederach notes that aspects of reconciliation can stand in tension with one another, such as

articulating a long-term, interdependent future on the one hand and the need for justice on the other (Lederach, 1997). Using another example, the need to foster economic change to ensure equality may require a change in resource allocations within a country, such as resources moving from the wealthy to the poor, but it may also demand the building of positive relationships between the same groups at the same time. Hamber and Kelly therefore believe, that reconciliation is both about addressing the five strands outlined, and simultaneously about the process of trying to address the complex paradoxes and tensions between them. Reconciliation can be measured not as an outcome but as the capacity to manage the tensions inherent in the process.

In fact, how the tensions are managed, in many senses, embodies the reconciliation process. This moves away from reconciliation being understood as an outcome, meaning a mended relationship between individuals or groups or even states, but asks the more critical question about the ability of the relationship to manage tension and endure despite such tensions. This understanding of reconciliation is more realistic in societies coming out of conflict where tensions are unavoidable. For example, balancing the need for justice with the demands of a peace process to let political prisoners out of jail as was the case in Northern Ireland and South Africa. There is no easy way of dealing with such dilemmas and whatever option or approach is chosen will be fraught with challenges.

Secondly, reconciliation is a morally loaded concept and different people approach the concept from their own ideological perspective. An individual's understanding of reconciliation is informed by their basic beliefs about the world. Different ideologies of reconciliation can be identified, as was discussed earlier in this chapter. We need to be aware that individuals will interpret differently the dimensions of reconciliation even if they agree on the importance of the common strands. Trying to reconcile different ideological positions - say, with regard to what attitudes need to change - is precisely what the reconciliation endeavour is about.

Drawing on the model outlined above, the interviews with young people were analysed using the Five Strand Model as a framework.



This project focused on two post-conflict contexts - Northern Ireland and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The study explored, in a comparative way: children and young people's experience of conflict in their region (the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland and the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia); their awareness and understanding of the conflict; where this awareness came from; their concepts of reconciliation; and views on the role of education in reconciliation. The approach was qualitative in nature to reflect the diversity of children and young people's experiences and perspectives. Ethical approval to conduct the research was obtained from the University of Ulster's Research Ethics Committee.

Education System in Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland, with a population of approximately 1.8 million, has a relatively small education system. Statutory education involves around 300,000 children within 868 primary, 157 secondary and 69 grammar schools.

Most children attend separate schools associated with their religious affiliation. Most Catholic children attend Catholic 'maintained' schools, while most Protestant children attend state 'controlled' schools. The education system includes a number of integrated schools (many of these have been established by parents to educate Catholic and Protestant children together and cater for approximately 6% of the pupil population). There are also a small number of Irish medium schools.¹

All schools receive funding from the State (largely determined by pupil numbers) and all schools are required by law to provide Religious Education. Although there is a common curriculum for all schools, Northern Ireland also operates a system of 'academic selection' whereby children sit a test at age eleven to determine their academic ability and whether they attend a 'grammar' or a 'secondary' school.

Since 1990, Education for Mutual Understanding and Cultural Heritage has been a cross-curricular theme of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. In 2007 these themes were strengthened and they are now taught more explicitly in primary schools under 'Personal Development and Mutual

¹ For a more detailed examination of Northern Ireland's education system, see Smith, A. (2001). Religious Segregation and the Emergence of Integrated Schools in Northern Ireland. *Oxford Review of Education*, 27 (4), 559-575.

Understanding'. In post-primary schools they are addressed under the theme of 'Local and Global Citizenship', which is an explicit element of the revised curriculum as well as a cross-curricular theme. Local and Global Citizenship addresses issues associated with diversity and inclusion; equality and social justice; human rights and responsibilities and democracy and active participation.

Also since 1990, all young people in Northern Ireland aged 11-14 learn about the historical origins of the 'two communities' 1600-1920 from multiple perspectives. The more recent history of the Troubles, however, is only studied by young people who choose to do Northern Ireland GCSE history.

The Department of Education, Northern Ireland, is currently conducting a Review of its Community Relations Policy.

Education System in Bosnia and Herzegovina ²

Bosnia and Herzegovina is almost four times the size of Northern Ireland and has a population of approximately 3.8 million. There are approximately 2,200 schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina (including a large number of small branch schools) and 13 Ministries of Education at the Entity/Cantonal/District level.

The current Common Core Curriculum consists of the elements common to all curricula in use, but lacks ethno-specific material. In each administrative region the dominant curriculum is

that of the majority ethnic group of the canton/entity (i.e., Bosniak, Croat or Serb). In three cantons with a more mixed population there are two curricula in force, used according to the ethnic majority in the school. This situation has given rise to the phenomenon of 'two schools under one roof', where a single pre-war school now houses two new schools, whose children study different curricula and are largely or entirely kept separate. Other schools in the country, which are mostly mono-ethnic, offer no alternative but assimilation with the majority – thus returnee families frequently choose to bus their children across regional boundaries, where possible, to schools of their 'own' ethnic group. Brcko District is the only place in the country with integrated schools. It has its own curriculum and offers alternative teaching on subjects of ethnic significance.

In 2002, given the increasing number of returnee families and their concerns regarding education options in their areas of return, the *Interim 'Agreement on Accommodation of Specific Needs and Rights of Returnee Children'* was signed and in March 2003, an Implementation Plan for this Interim Agreement was adopted by all Ministries of Education. This Implementation Plan allowed parents the possibility to opt for the curriculum of their own choice for the national group of subjects. However, parents do not seek this option unless their ethnic group is present in significant numbers. Thus, outside Brcko District, it remains extremely rare.

² For a more detailed examination of the post-war education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, see Stabback, P. (2007). Common curriculum, core curriculum or common curriculum standards: finding a solution for Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Prospects*, 37 (4), 449-467.

Sample

The sample comprised 91 children and young people – 46 from Northern Ireland and 45 from Bosnia and Herzegovina.³ Of the 46 children and young people interviewed in Northern Ireland, 15 were aged 24-25 (eight males, seven females), 15 were aged 16-18 (seven males, eight females), and 16 were eleven years old (eight males, eight females). Of the 45 children and young people interviewed in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 15 were aged 24-25 (three males, twelve females), 15 were aged 16-18 (four males, eleven females), and 15 were aged 11 (seven males, eight females).⁴

Table 1 Numbers of participants

REGION	AGE GROUP			
	24-25	16-18	11	TOTAL
NI	15	15	16	46
Male/ Female	8 /7	7/8	8/8	23/23
B-H	15	15	15	45
Male/ Female	3/12	4/11	7/8	14/31
TOTAL	30	30	31	91
Male/Female	11/19	11/19	15/16	37/54

Bosnia & Herzegovina time-line

24-25 Years Old

16-18 Years Old

11 Years Old

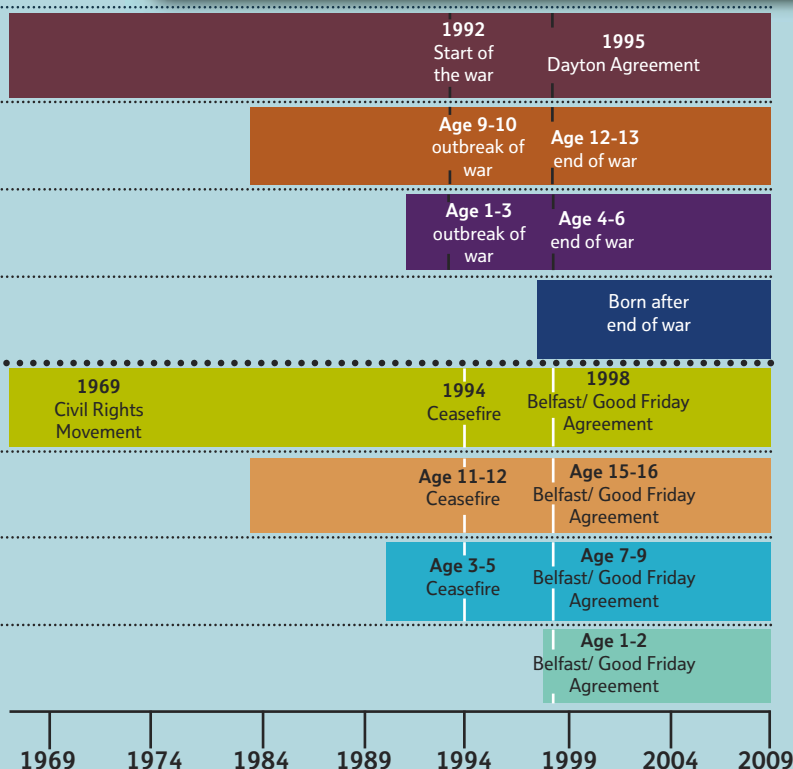
Northern Ireland Time-Line

24-25 Years Old

16-18 Years Old

11 Years Old

Table 2 Participant's ages vis-à-vis the conflict in their region



³ The original funding proposal proposed for research to be undertaken in three post-conflict regions: Northern Ireland, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Basque Country in Spain. Data collection began in all three regions in May 2007. A consultation with 23 primary and post-primary teachers and interviews with fifteen 24-25 year olds were conducted in the Basque Country in that month. On 6 June 2007, ETA - the Basque separatist group - called an end to their permanent ceasefire. As a result, after much debate and discussion the project team, in conjunction with their Basque partner organisation, took the difficult decision not to proceed with the data collection in the Basque Country. However the project went ahead as planned in Northern Ireland and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

⁴ Additionally, a series of focus groups and small group interviews were undertaken with 43 primary and post-primary school teachers in both regions. Interviews were also conducted with representatives of twelve support groups in Northern Ireland (victims and survivors, ex-prisoners and minority ethnic support groups). This report focuses solely on the data collected from children and young people.

While every effort was made to interview equal numbers of males and females, securing young men's participation in the study in Bosnia and Herzegovina proved exceptionally difficult. The imbalance of males and females in the older groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina may in part be explained by young men's reluctance to speak about the war or, more generally, by young men's avoidance of situations where they have to talk about their feelings. This raises questions about possible gender differences in attitudes not only to violent conflict but also to reconciliation – an issue beyond the scope of this study but which nevertheless merits further examination.

In Northern Ireland, respondents in the 24-25 age group were identified through contact with over 160 civil society organisations on the Community Relations Council's database.

With regard to the 16-18 age group, twelve of the respondents were accessed via schools invited to take part in the research. Pupils were recruited from three post-primary (secondary) schools: one controlled, one Catholic-maintained and one integrated school. Schools in three areas of Northern Ireland were chosen in order to reflect the diversity of experience of the 'Troubles': one school in an area of Belfast that had experienced relatively high levels of violence and sectarian tension; one school in a part of the north west that had been the site of a bombing in the 1970s; and one school in an area in the south east that had very little direct experience of the violence. Location (urban or rural) was considered when selecting schools to participate in the study. All three schools were coeducational. School principals were requested

to distribute information sheets and consent forms to pupils in Years 12-14 (i.e., aged 16-18). Of the pupils who returned forms, four pupils were selected at random from each of the three schools (twelve pupils in total).

In addition to accessing respondents via schools, a UK-based charity which works with disadvantaged children and young people was invited to participate in the study. This ensured the inclusion in the sample marginalised adolescents who for a variety of reasons were no longer attending post-primary schools. Research contact was made with three such young people: two adolescents (both female) in the greater Belfast area; and one (male) in Derry/Londonderry. Two of these young people were currently enrolled in courses at institutes of further and higher education (FHE), while the third had left school at the age of fourteen and was not currently enrolled in any educational institution. All three young people lived in housing estates in areas that had experienced relatively high levels of paramilitary activity, violence and sectarian tension.

Much like the 16-18 age group, eleven year old respondents were recruited from three primary schools: one controlled, one Catholic-maintained and one integrated school. All three schools were coeducational. As with the older age group, school principals were requested to distribute information sheets and consent forms to pupils in P7 (i.e., aged eleven years). Of the pupils who returned forms, five to six pupils were selected at random from each of the three schools (16 pupils in total).

All respondents in the 24-25 and 16-18 age groups were interviewed individually. Interviews lasted between one and two hours for the 24-25 age group, and between twenty and fifty minutes for the 16-18 age group, and were semi-structured in nature. With regard to the youngest age group, the eleven year olds were given the option of being interviewed either individually or in small friendship groups. Interviews lasted between five and fifteen minutes.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina the 24-25 year olds were recruited through contact with teachers and educators in different towns and cities across the country. Respondents were interviewed in both urban and rural areas, including from the Bihać, Banja Luka, Sarajevo, Mostar and Tuzla areas. Respondents from the 16-18 age group were recruited from secondary schools (both 'Gymnasiums' and 'Secondary Vocational' schools) in Sarajevo, Banja Luka and Mostar. Eleven year old respondents were recruited from primary schools in Sarajevo, Matuzici, Banja Luka and Nova Bila.

In both Northern Ireland and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the interview schedule was piloted with two of the respondents in each age group. Based on the responses given to the reconciliation-related questions, the interview schedule was revised to include an explanation of the term 'reconciliation' for respondents unfamiliar with the concept.⁵

Where respondents were aged 18 or over, consent was obtained from the respondents themselves. Where respondents were less than 18 years of age, permission was obtained from pupils, parents and school principals/ school pedagogues (in Bosnia and Herzegovina) /charity participation workers (as appropriate). Respondents were assured that no quotations would be personally attributed to them and that their school would not be identified. All interviews were audio recorded, fully transcribed and, in the case of the Bosnia and Herzegovina data, translated into English.

Data Analysis

The resulting transcripts were imported into a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis package, *QSR NVivo 8*, and subsequently coded. The decision to use NVivo was made on the basis of the volume of data collected.⁶ The coding structure was revised as necessary throughout the coding process and additional themes were built up from the data itself. Thus the NVivo package facilitated both a deductive and an inductive analysis approach.

⁵ Responses given to questions asked during pilot interviews indicated that some young people might be either unfamiliar with the term 'reconciliation' or unsure what it meant. In order to stimulate discussion with respondents who indicated that they had not come across the term, or were familiar with it but had no idea what it meant, the researcher provided a brief explanation based on Hamber and Kelly's working definition of reconciliation (2005).

⁶ The overall data set for the study is large - 121 transcripts in total.



Experience of conflict

Experience of war in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Many respondents from Bosnia and Herzegovina recalled the disruption to normal life caused by the outbreak of war between 1992 and 1995 (for example, food and water shortages and power blackouts). Several respondents were close to the front lines during the war and recalled their homes being damaged or destroyed as a result of bombing and shelling.

The theme of **displacement** emerged strongly from the data, with many respondents and their families being forced to move multiple times as a result of the war. Some were internally displaced within Bosnia and Herzegovina while others were able to seek refuge abroad, for example in Serbia, Croatia and Germany, returning to Bosnia and Herzegovina after the end of hostilities. A few respondents remained in their home towns for the duration of the war and its aftermath. One of these respondents was detained, with her family, in a prisoner-of-war camp for a short period of time. Another respondent and his family were stranded for nine months in a town that was under siege.

“We left at the beginning [of the war] and that was really by pure chance... Someone shot at our balcony, so we went to stay with my grandmother in Maglaj [town in northern Bosnia and Herzegovina]... We were in the prisoner-of-war camp there for 17 days, and after that we went to Croatia.”

24 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

With regard to direct impact of the war on respondents in terms of bereavement and injury, a few respondents mentioned deaths and injuries in their family as a result of the war. Other respondents referred to friends and neighbours who had lost close relatives in the war. However the theme of **separation** – from parents, siblings, extended family and friends - emerged more strongly from the data than exposure to the violence and destruction of war. Many respondents were separated from parents (particularly fathers) and loved ones for long periods of time during the war, and maintaining contact with them was difficult if not impossible.

Given that many respondents' fathers (and sometimes brothers, too) were active combatants in the war on the Bosnian, Serbian or Croatian sides, it is not surprising that particular reference was made to separation from fathers. Several respondents expressed relief that, for various reasons (for example, ill health), their fathers were not mobilised or were released early from military service.

A few respondents described how they felt they had missed out on their childhood as a result of being separated from one or both parents during the war. Other respondents described the long-lasting impact of separation from siblings, for example from brothers who were sent abroad during the war in order to avoid military service. Respondents also recalled the distress of being separated from close friends and some expressed regret about losing contact with friends whose families sought refuge abroad.

"I did not see my parents for six months... I had a friend and I was spending a lot of time with her and her family, so in a way I did not feel so much the separation from my parents... At the time maybe I was too busy. I had a lot of friends, I studied a lot and went to training... so I did not let myself think too much, but there were nights when I just cried."

24 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"Being a child, you do sense that your father is missing, that he is in the place where the war is going on, that something could happen..."

24 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"It was horrible for me because I had a best friend and we spent 24 hours a day with each

other. She left, since everyone fled to the villages because they had basements there... to escape the bombardment... The separation from her was terrible for me."

25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"I have a friend, both of her parents and many other family members were killed in the war. She is alone now, does not have any siblings. She lives with her uncle, but her life is not even close to the one she had with her parents. She does not even want to know anything about it [the war]. She does not want to remember it at all... She lost her grandparents and her parents."

17 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

The theme of **fear** also emerged with respondents recalling feeling very frightened as small children caught up in the war. One respondent spoke of "living in constant fear". Another respondent developed a fear of men in military uniforms, regardless of which side they belonged to. She recalled becoming "numb with fear" when she encountered such men and felt afraid to approach anyone wearing a military uniform, even her own father.

Related to the theme of fear was the obvious psychological distress which some respondents experienced (and which some continue to experience) due to the war. Some respondents found it difficult to talk about their experiences and memories of the war and a few expressed a strong desire to forget what had happened during the war.

“It happened, it is over, and I am trying to forget it as much as I can.”

25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Several respondents pointed to **experiential differences** within the generation of children and young people that had lived through the war, particularly between those who had remained in Bosnia and Herzegovina and those who managed to escape to other countries. Respondents who had been in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the war were envious of friends who had been able to seek refuge abroad. Respondents who had been abroad, or in areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina that were less affected by the war, were aware of how fortunate they had been to avoid the bombing, shelling and sniper fire which characterised the war experience of many of their peers.

“I have many friends who are the same nationality as me, like my cousins, who were abroad during the war... and even they see the war differently to those who lived through it... That is a huge difference.”

24 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Well, Banja Luka... the city itself... during the war there was not direct warfare... it was never on the front lines of the battlefield... I am happy that I was born here and that I lived here and that I stayed here... and I did not experience the war as many other people did...”

24 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Regarding the particular experiences of children and young people during the war, normal childhood activities, for example playing games with siblings and friends, were affected. Being

obliged to stay inside apartment buildings during shelling meant that children had many, often welcome, opportunities to play together. Children were forced to become inventive, adapting their play to the war-time circumstances in which they found themselves. For example, a lack of toys encouraged one respondent to use bits of plastic crates to mend a pair of broken skis so that he and his friends could play in the snow. Others recalled a scrambling to collect fragments of exploded shells in order to sell them on to the highest bidder. Almost inevitably, many games involved some reference to the war (playing soldiers, playing with weapons, etc.).

“We were trying as much as we could to, how to put it, to remain “normal”... Most games were...we were mostly playing in the apartment building or in a basement, depending on... if there was no shelling or the like, we would go outside and play as we always did. But, of course, if the shells were falling or if there was no ... if we did not have conditions to play outside, we spent time in basements, killing boredom in various ways...”

24 year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“We had to stay inside because the shooting started... As children, we were just happy to spend time together with other kids, we didn’t really know what was actually happening...”

25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“We played together, but it was all pretty much improvisation. We didn’t have any games or toys... nothing. We improvised with everything. Like, during winter, we wanted to ski. We had some broken skis, and so we broke up some

plastic crates to fill in the holes in the skis so that we could ski... So, yes, we got along..."
25 year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Despite the many bad memories associated with the war, respondents also recalled a strong sense of community based on shared experience and mutual support, with relationships between friends and neighbours becoming "closer in the distress".

"I think that it brought us closer... It helped to reveal, as it is the case in every hard situation, who is human and who is not... We often helped each other... and closer... not only with the people who you were already close to, but with others, too... You had to help each other. And probably it gave us additional strength to live through it all..."

24 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Clearly, there were significant experiential differences among the three age groups interviewed, with the oldest age group (24-25 year olds) having the clearest memories of the war and its aftermath. These respondents were born in 1982-1983. In 1992, when the war broke out, they were just nine or ten years of age. While most had clear memories of the war, many also spoke about being too young to really understand the implications of what was happening around them. Many of the 16-18 year olds also had memories of the war, but their recollections were much hazier. This is unsurprising, given that they would have been toddlers when the war began in 1992, and just four, five and six years old when the war ended in

1995. The youngest age group, the eleven year olds, were born in 1996 and thus had no memories of the war. However some did speak about the impact the war had had on their families, for example war-related bereavement and displacement.

Experience of the Troubles in Northern Ireland

Experience of the Troubles in Northern Ireland varied greatly, with some respondents very directly affected and others much less so. Several respondents came from areas which had experienced significant levels of sectarian violence and tension over the years. As such, these respondents experienced the conflict to some degree by virtue of where they lived. Other respondents were exposed to the conflict due to the occupation of a parent or relative (for example, the children of police officers and army personnel) or as a result of a parent or relative's active involvement in the Troubles (for example, the children of ex-combatants). Almost all respondents recounted stories about their parents' and grandparents' first-hand experiences of the Troubles.

The themes of **intimidation** and **displacement** emerged from the data. Two respondents described how their families were forced to move house because of repeated threats and intimidation. Both the children of mixed marriages, one lived in a predominantly loyalist village while the other lived in a predominantly republican part of Belfast.⁷ They spoke of graffiti and broken windows, their cars being burned out

⁷ In Northern Ireland, the term 'mixed marriages' is often used to refer to a marriage between a Roman Catholic and another Christian from the Protestant denomination.

and their homes being petrol-bombed.

“We had sort of the usual sort of graffiti and broken windows and being threatened with knives and our own neighbours, like, our friend around the corner... her house was petrol bombed and we were told that we were going to be burned out, so... It took us a very long time to sell the house, though. We were there for about three years in those conditions...”

25 year old female, Northern Ireland

“Because we lived there... our house got broke into, our car was burned on numerous occasions and really, it was very stressful for the family. So we kind of talked my both parents into moving out of the estate and moving out of Belfast altogether...”

24 year old female, Northern Ireland

Other respondents and their families were obliged to relocate because of the nature of a parent’s job. For example, one respondent’s family had to move house every three years because her father was in the police and the then Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) recommended it. She recalled how neighbours of hers, also an RUC family, were forced to move house at very short notice because of a threat they had received. It frightened her how the neighbours simply “vanished”, and as a child she worried that the same would happen to her own family. Another respondent’s family regularly received death threats because of her father’s position within the RUC. Once when she was young she opened a Christmas card addressed to her father only to find a bullet inside it. She recalled not being fully aware of the implications of this and other incidents when she was a child. However,

she described the gradual realisation as she grew up of the danger which characterised her father’s work, and the fear associated with this.

The few respondents who had fathers in the police service, or who were themselves in the security forces, all mentioned the **disruption** frequent threats caused to their daily lives. One described living in a “completely fortified” home complete with bullet-proof doors, reinforced windows and panic button alarms. Another respondent, who was himself in the army for a time, had to check underneath his car for bombs every time he left his house.

“Now one family we knew lived quite close to us and then one day they went, they had to move. I don’t know what exactly happened, they got some sort of threat, and, like, they literally just vanished, and my Mum actually got a phone call and had to go and actually turn off the oven because they literally, like, an army van came, they were all put in the back of it, and they weren’t allowed to go back to their house, none of their stuff or anything.”

25 year old female, Northern Ireland

“It was a kind of gradual build-up of, you know, seeing... like, Mum and Dad making sure the doors and checked out all the time constantly to see what was going on here and things on the news... and then the fear kind of developed of: ‘My Daddy is a policeman’ and ‘Will he come home tonight?’. You know, and that kind of realisation of... it is not an everyday job and my Daddy doesn’t work in an office... he is out there and he might not come home tonight.”

24 year old female, Northern Ireland

Other respondents recalled a different type of

disruption to their daily lives – police raids on their homes and parents being arrested and interned without trial.

“There was a protest outside Armagh prison. The protest was baton-charged by the RUC and my mother was arrested... when my brother was a baby... And she was asking to be arrested along with the baby, but she was arrested nevertheless and her friends took my brother home to my father... and after a day or two my mother was released and brought home. But she always imagined that that had a really big impact on my brother as a child because he was always very close to his mother and never wanted to be separated again...”

25 year old male, Northern Ireland

“I also remember that when I, I suppose I was very young and our house was raided by the police because the IRA... or someone had planted semtex in our back garden so as to hide it and the police got a tip off about this and they raided the house and I remember you could, I could just hear all muffled voices from my bedroom and as I walked out the door and I must have been about five - four or five - and I just sort of half asleep caught a glimpse of this man with a moustache... and my Mum’s brother had a moustache, so my immediate association is you have a moustache, you are in my house, you are my Mum’s brother, you are my Uncle Frankie, so I dove on this man who was a policeman, ‘Uncle Frankie, Uncle Frankie!’ and telling him all I had done that day... and this poor policeman stuck on the landing with this child hanging off him..!”

25 year old female, Northern Ireland

More generally, respondents remembered the frequent violence and bloodshed which characterised the Troubles. Several respondents had close relatives who were killed in the Troubles.⁸ Some had relatives who were involved in paramilitary organisations. Many had memories of bombs exploding near to where they lived, and frequent reference was made to soldiers patrolling the streets, riots, petrol bombs, paint bombs, shootings, stabbings, sectarian attacks, punishment beatings, kneecappings and police violence and provocation.

“I suppose, the everyday stuff of avoiding blocked roads or bomb scares or... all that kind of stuff. But that was normal.”

25 year old male, Northern Ireland

“I remember as well there always being soldiers on the street and they would have let... Some children would have went over and they would have let them look down their gun... you know, the wee eye piece and all... It is funny how it just seemed so normal at the time... when you think of all these solders, you know, hiding in a bush, you know [laughs]... So it is a bit mad when you think about it.”

25 year old female, Northern Ireland

“And then too there was the time there was a booby trap bomb placed in the neighbour across the street’s car... and I remember the police cordoning off that area and all the neighbours came into our house that night and I was

⁸ Between 1969 and 2001, 3,523 people were killed and some 47,000 injured as a result of the conflict in Northern Ireland. Almost 60% of the victims were killed by Republicans, almost 30% by Loyalists, and 10% by the British and Irish security forces. See <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk> for more information.

running about with a gas mask and I think that was my earliest memory. I was only about six or seven."

24 year old male, Northern Ireland

"I remember in 1986, I was with my Mother... there was a guy... he was shot by a British soldier. He was out jogging... and a British soldier just shot him dead at point blank range... and, again, I was only a few years old at this stage, but I can remember it. I can remember hearing the shot and the commotion around it and then my Mother being heavily involved and the Ambulance and so on and trying to resuscitate the guy... So that was one of my first experiences of seeing... in front of my very eyes... so I can remember that there."

25 year old male, Northern Ireland

One respondent spoke about being at the funeral at Milltown Cemetery in Belfast in 1988 which Michael Stone attacked.⁹ He recalled the traumatic impact this experience had on him.

Generally speaking, respondents who recounted stories about growing up during the Troubles (those in the 24-25 age group) tended to see the Troubles as part of history. However, from the perspective of some of the adolescent respondents, the conflict was not over but very much continued to be part of their daily lives. Some respondents had friends who had been the victims of recent, violent sectarian attacks, while others had friends who were actively involved in local paramilitary organisations. One

respondent lived in an area where there had been feuding between rival loyalist paramilitary organisations. Her uncle had been stabbed the week before she was interviewed for this project. The perception emerged strongly from such respondents that the Troubles were not over, but in fact ongoing.

"My uncle got stabbed on Friday there with it all... 'cos they're wanting to kill him... He's got a fractured skull and he's got to get stitches in his back. And they tried to stab my other uncle... He was going down to get the kids and they just saw him going into the house and started trying to stab him, but it just ripped his coat."

16 year old female, Northern Ireland

"My friend, about a month ago he was walking over Queen's Bridge and four boys from the Markets sort of area... they just came up and like smacked him over the head... smacked him over the face with a bottle. He was lucky enough, do you know, that the bottle didn't break. But his cheekbone was actually shattered and he fell unconscious and then they just had to take him to hospital and that was... So it just, you know, it kind of makes you think... oh, do you know, they're still at it. Like, they are still wanting to cause conflict and stuff between both sides."

18 year old female, Northern Ireland

Several respondents, particularly those from

⁹ On Wednesday 16th of March 1988, the funerals were held at Milltown Cemetery in Belfast of three Irish Republican Army (IRA) members killed in Gibraltar (on 6 March 1988). During the funerals a Loyalist gunman, Michael Stone, launched a grenade and gun attack on mourners. Three people were killed and fifty injured. The whole episode was recorded by television news cameras. The police and army had withdrawn to avoid any confrontation with the mourners. Stone was chased to a nearby motorway where he was attacked by a number of mourners. The police arrived in time to save his life. See <http://www.cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/chron/ch88.htm> for more information.

areas which had experienced relatively high levels of sectarian violence and tension, pointed out that, regardless of the peace process, some young people in Northern Ireland continued to participate regularly in ‘recreational’ rioting.¹⁰ Demonstrating how recreational rioting was an accepted form of entertainment not only for teenagers but also for young children, one respondent spoke about children in his area having “a wee mini-riot” where some children pretended to be police while others collected bottles and stones to throw at them. As in Bosnia and Herzegovina, children and young people’s exposure to conflict in Northern Ireland was often reflected in the types of games they played and recreational activities they engaged in with their friends.

“It’s only now that you think back about it... you didn’t know why you were doing it... If you seen the police, you lifted the first brick, or first bottle, and you threw it. And that was that. And that was the norm... everybody done it... You grew up, you followed the older boys... This is what the older boys done, and that’s what you do. And it’s still like that.”

25 year old male, Northern Ireland

“The wee’uns actually, the younger ones, at a workshop made a police landrover and an army landrover out of wood, and they caged them all up... And there used to be two people would get inside a landrover and everybody else used to go and collect bottles and stones and have like a wee mini-riot... People would come through and you would throw stones at the police...”

24 year old male, Northern Ireland

The difference in young people’s experiences of the conflict was stark. While some respondents were very directly affected by the Troubles, others remained almost completely untouched by them. Several respondents explained how they felt fortunate to have been sheltered from the conflict.

“Well I don’t really have many memories because it didn’t really affect me.”

16 year old male, Northern Ireland

“Well, because of where my house is... about a five-minute, ten-minute journey away from where the riots took place – walking distance from us – so we never really had any problems with that...”

18 year old male, Northern Ireland

“Yeah nearly once a week the houses and people passing were getting attacked... by petrol bombs, paint bombs... The family that lived up the street from me, they lived right on the interface and their windows were getting broke every night, you know, it was just mad... the things that went on.”

16 year old male, Northern Ireland

Exposure to the conflict and perceptions of what was ‘normal’ in a given area varied hugely, as demonstrated by the following very different experiences of two teenage respondents. One of these respondents was brought up in what she called a “loyalist paramilitary estate” and

¹⁰ The term ‘recreational rioting’ refers to the “low-level but persistent trouble caused by children and youths at interface areas across the city [of Belfast]. Such trouble is frequently an adjunct to the rising tensions of the ‘marching season’, but in many areas it also has its own dynamic born of boredom, frustration and alienation from the larger community” (p.1). See Jarman, N. and O’Halloran, C. (2001) ‘Recreational rioting: Young people, interface areas and violence’, *Child Care in Practice*, 7:12, 2-16.

subsequently moved to a quieter, nationalist estate. She found the absence of violence and the lack of a police presence in her new surroundings very alien, and commented that it was strange that there was no fighting in the new estate and no punishment attacks, for example, kneecappings.

“It is just weird, because there is no fighting, there is no police coming in, and there is no people getting kneecapped or nothing...”
17 year old female, Northern Ireland

This directly contrasts with the perception of ‘normal’ (and ‘abnormal’) behaviour of another respondent, who lived in a rural area which had experienced very little sectarian violence or tension. During the summer of 2007, she was involved in a church-based youth work project in an interface area of Belfast. It was her first insight into life on the interface and she was completely taken aback to discover the levels of hatred and mistrust between the communities on either side of the peace-line.¹¹ The efforts of the church group to bring young people together across the traditional divide appear to have been well-meaning, but perhaps somewhat naïve. The respondent was shocked and scared when a church barbeque with a bouncing castle descended into a riot across the peace line with children and young people throwing bricks at each other, and the police eventually intervening and closing the peace gates.

Clearly, there were significant experiential differences among the three age groups interviewed, with the oldest age group, born in 1982-1983, having the clearest memories of the Troubles. In 1998, when the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement was signed, they were fifteen or sixteen years of age. However, experience of sectarian violence and division was not limited to the oldest age group. Several of the 16-18 year olds lived in areas which continued to experience relatively high levels of sectarianism and violence, and spoke about very recent experiences of violent sectarian attacks. This is unsurprising, given that tensions continue to bubble beneath the surface in many parts of Northern Ireland, regardless of the political developments of recent times. Some of the youngest age group, who were born in 1996 and thus had no direct memories of the Troubles, had witnessed rioting in their areas. One of the eleven year olds reported that his maternal grandmother had been killed in a bombing in the early 1970s.

Children and young people’s experiences of conflict in the two regions

The significant differences between children and young people’s experiences of conflict in Northern Ireland and Bosnia and Herzegovina stem from the substantial differences in the nature of the conflicts in the two regions. The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina was an

¹¹ The term “peace lines” refers to barriers separating Catholic and Protestant neighbourhoods in Belfast, Londonderry and elsewhere in Northern Ireland. Peace lines consist of iron, brick and steel walls up to 7.6 metres (25 feet) high, and range in length from a few hundred metres to over five kilometres (three miles). Some have gates in them which allow passage by day, and which are closed at night. The stated purpose of the barriers is to minimise intercommunal sectarian violence between Protestant and Catholic communities. For more information see Jarman, N. (2008). ‘Security and Segregation: Interface Barriers in Belfast’. *Shared Space*, Issue 6, June 2008, pp21-34. Belfast: Community Relations Council (CRC).

international armed conflict, involving Bosnia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (later Serbia and Montenegro) as well as Croatia, which lasted three and a half years from March 1992 to November 1995. Around 100,000 people were killed, and almost two million displaced. By contrast, the conflict in Northern Ireland was a long, low intensity conflict, spanning a period of over thirty years from the late 1960s until the late 1990s and the signing of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement in 1998. The ‘Troubles’ have claimed the lives of over three and a half thousand people.¹²

Although the sample for this study is indicative, rather than representative, in general the diversity of children and young people’s experiences of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and its aftermath and the Troubles in Northern Ireland reflect the experiences in the wider society in both these regions.

Given the huge numbers of people displaced as a result of the war in Bosnia, it is not surprising that the themes of displacement and separation – from parents, siblings, extended family and close friends – emerges so strongly from the data. Given the very large proportion of men in the country who were recruited, forcibly or otherwise, to fight in the war, it is also unsurprising that many respondents make particular reference to separation from fathers and sometimes brothers also. As well as reflecting common war experiences, the data also reflects experiences unique to children of the war. For example, many respondents mentioned being too young to fully comprehend what was happening during the war. This might

explain why the psychological and emotional impact of separation, particularly on the oldest respondents, who would have been nine or ten years of age when the war broke out, appears to have been more marked than the impact of the violence and destruction of war. Similarly, respondents’ accounts demonstrate children’s flexibility and creativity in relation to the war’s impact on normal childhood activities such as playing games with brothers, sisters and friends.

The varied nature of children and young people’s experiences of conflict in Northern Ireland also reflects the diversity of experience of the Troubles due to a combination of factors, not least the high levels of residential segregation. Respondents’ exposure to the conflict appears to depend very much on where they live, and whether or not their parents were in some way involved in the conflict, either in policing it or as a political activist or combatant. Respondents frequently recounted stories related to their parents’ experience of the Troubles. This may be explained by the fact that they have lived through what one respondent referred to as the “tail end” of the Troubles, and as such have few first-hand memories of the violence and bloodshed which characterised the early years of the conflict. Although Northern Ireland arguably is more peaceful now than at any time in the past forty years, sectarianism remains pervasive and sectarian attacks and rioting continue to occur. This may go some way to explaining the frequent reference to rioting, even among the youngest age group of eleven year olds who have no direct memories of the Troubles, but may nevertheless have witnessed riots.

¹² See footnote 8, above.

Generational Differences

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, respondents spoke about generational differences with regard to the impact of the war. One respondent commented that, particularly for those who had been bereaved as a result of the war, “there is an impact even today”. There was a feeling that the situation was particularly difficult for those old enough to recall what life was like in the former Yugoslavia, before the war, and who were keenly aware of how things had deteriorated since the war’s end.

“We know what life was like before [the war], and we know what life is like now... So we know it is chaos, and there are no rights, rules or anything.”

25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

While respondents in the 16-18 age group were too young to really remember the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina

(one commented that they “went through it and really forgot most of it”), those in the oldest age group believed their generation had been adversely affected by their war-time experiences. Having worked hard to put the war behind them and focus on securing an education and finding employment, they felt “very disappointed” with the current state of affairs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly the high levels of unemployment and consequent absence of job prospects. Some felt that the situation was worse still for people now in their early thirties, who were teenagers during the war. While everyone in Bosnia and Herzegovina faced the same challenges regarding employment

prospects, compared to those in their mid-twenties, people in their thirties also carry the memories of direct experience of violence.

Although they were born after the war’s end, the eleven year old respondents also demonstrated an awareness of the impact the war had had on their parents’ and grandparents’ generation.

“I am sure that it affected the older generation more, because some lost sons, parents or other family members...”

Eleven year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

In Northern Ireland, too, many respondents, even in the youngest age group, made reference to the substantial differences between their generation and their parents’ and grandparents’ generation with regard to experience of the Troubles.

“Maybe some, like, older people was like involved and it kind of affected those... that is because maybe some of their relatives have died because of the war and that upset them.”

Eleven year old female, Northern Ireland



SUMMARY

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, the key themes emerging related to children and young people's experiences of the war are the impact of **displacement, separation and fear**. There were significant experiential differences in relation to children and young people's experiences of the war depending upon whether they remained in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the war or were displaced, internally or externally, as a result of the war.

With regard to children and young people's experiences of the Troubles in **Northern Ireland**, there were significant experiential differences depending on two main factors, namely where respondents lived and what their parents' relationship was to the conflict (for example, if they were involved in the army or police service, if they were ex-prisoners, etc.).

Unlike in Bosnia and Herzegovina where only the oldest respondents, the 24-25 age group, had clear memories of the war, experience of the Troubles in Northern Ireland was not limited to any one age group.

Impact of conflict on schooling

Bosnia and Herzegovina

When the war broke out in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992, respondents in the oldest age group were nine or ten years of age. Of the three age groups interviewed, respondents who were this age at the time had the clearest memories of the war and its impact on schooling. Several of these respondents described the disruption caused to their education by the war.¹³ Because of constant shelling and bombardment, schools were often closed for days on end - in some instances, for weeks and even months. In one case, schooling stopped altogether for an entire year. Because of the intensity of the shelling, for safety reasons classes often took place in the school basements. In order not to expose children to sniper fire outside, at times teachers taught groups of children in the apartment blocks where they lived. Respondents recalled structural damage to schools and classrooms caused by the war, as well as a shortage of basic teaching and learning resources.

“Every other day there was a break in classes because of the bombing, shooting and so on...”
25 year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Of course there were no regular classes for about a year or two... Sometimes classes were interrupted, naturally, when there was shelling. A lot of students were not able to attend classes... I mean, there was no point risking your life because

of classes... I think that in 1994 classes started again, and then continued with some minor breaks, so that after 1995 classes were going normally.”

24 year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Our school closed and we had to go to school in the basement. I think we were there for two years... We heard gunfire, grenades, everything...”

24 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Blackboard? I don’t think we had one. We had some paper on which the teachers would write. The space was totally dark, dirty... lots of mice.”
24 year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Almost all respondents in the 24-25 age group (13 out of 15 respondents) had to change school at least once during the war. Some respondents moved schools many times. One respondent, for example, described moving schools three times during, and in the immediate aftermath of, the war. For many respondents, the experience of moving schools (and home) - leaving behind friends and a familiar school environment - was difficult and unsettling at first. Many respondents did not know where they were moving to. One even recalled having to consult an atlas to locate the town to which her family was moving.

“Primary school... I completed the first two grades in Sarajevo, in Dobrinja. The third grade I completed in Croatia, fourth in Slovenia, fifth, sixth and seventh in Germany, and then I got back to Sarajevo.”

25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

¹³ For a more detailed examination of the impact of the war on the education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, see Stabback, P. (2007). Common curriculum, core curriculum or common curriculum standards: finding a solution for Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Prospects*, 37 (4), 449-467.

“Changing schools was horrible for me. During that transition between schools you are changing, literally, you are changing your life. So you are arriving here, you do not know anybody... ”

24 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Refugee children’s experiences at their new schools varied, with some schools placing them in classes together with local children, while other schools put all refugee children together in a separate class. How well refugee children settled into their new school environment depended to a large extent on how they were received by the school community. In some cases, principals, teachers and pupils were warm and welcoming, and this seemed to aid refugee children in adjusting to their new surroundings. The transition for such children was made much easier when they felt accepted.

“There [in Medugorje] I went to fifth grade and it was not traumatic at all, because the whole grade was made up of refugees, mostly refugees from Mostar... It was not bad.”

24 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“They accept you, the teachers spend time with you... Those children and teacher helped us so much, and they helped us not to feel miserable because of our situation.”

25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

In other cases, the school environment was less welcoming, making it harder for refugee children to settle into their new schools. In some cases, pupils in receiving schools were openly hostile to children seeking refuge from the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, teasing and bullying them

because they were different. One respondent found moving to a school on the Croatian coast “traumatic”. She recalled how being the recipients of humanitarian aid marked refugee children out as different. Local pupils “looked at us in a strange way” and “even laughed at” refugee children from Bosnia and Herzegovina. One girl’s sister was teased so badly that she refused to attend school.

“Our refugee status was always known... always when there was some aid, the five of us would receive it. And you are in a way marked, you are different from the rest.”

24 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Sometimes even teachers were inhospitable towards newly arrived refugee pupils. In some cases, this took the form of subtle discrimination. One respondent, for example, commented that “there was some indirect reproaching...reflected in the marks [given] and humiliations”. In other cases, teachers were much more direct, as illustrated by the following quotation.

“The war was over and my German language teacher asked me: ‘Why don’t you go back to Krupa? There is a gymnasium [secondary school] in Krupa too.’ And I said: ‘Well, I just don’t want to!’ I was upset and I said to myself: ‘I will prove to all of you that I can do it... that I am valuable and I can achieve as much as someone from Bihać.’”

24 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Despite encountering many difficulties and frequent upheaval, respondents appear to have been remarkably positive and resilient.

In comparison with the 24-25 age group, the data from interviews suggested that the war had less impact on the schooling of 16-18 age group. Born in 1989-1991, these respondents were still very young – just four or five years old – when the war ended. One respondent described how she had to move school (and home) because of shelling in the area. However, often it was the ‘returnees’ in this age group whose schooling was most disrupted in the aftermath of the war. These respondents’ families left Bosnia during the war, returning once hostilities had ceased. One respondent, for example, was born in Zagreb (Croatia) and lived there until she was five. Her family then moved to Germany and she attended school there until she turned eight. In 1998, the family moved back to Bosnia and Herzegovina, to the town of Omarska, and later to Banja Luka, where she completed her education.

The transition back to school in Bosnia and Herzegovina was not always an easy one, with many returnee children experiencing language difficulties upon their return from countries such as Germany and the U.S.A. Often, such children were seen as ‘different’ because they had only a basic grasp of Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian, or because they had not experienced the war to the same extent as their classmates, whose families had no option but to remain in Bosnia for the duration of the war. In this way, some of the respondents’ schooling was disrupted indirectly as a result of the war.

For the youngest age group (the eleven year olds - born in 1996, after the war had ended), the war did not disrupt their schooling, although many were clearly aware of the devastating impact the

war had on their own families, as well as on wider society in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

“I am sure that it affected the older generation more, because some lost sons, parents or other family members...”

Eleven year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“It is awful now. Many people don’t have their homes... People simply do not have money to even pay all their bills. They don’t have jobs. Many leave their homes to work elsewhere... even abroad... and it is very tiring for people. And, urgently, that problem needs to be solved. It is not OK.”

Eleven year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“If this war hadn’t happened, Bosnia and Herzegovina would be a much better country now... more advanced... maybe even a member of the EU.”

Eleven year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Because of the war, our country Bosnia and Herzegovina is divided into two entities, which we don’t really like. We have the Republic of Sprska where... only Serbs live. And then, here, we have the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where Croats and Bosniaks live. That is really difficult, and our schools are divided into Bosniak and Croat parts and nobody likes that...”

Eleven year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Many respondents in this age group reported positive experiences of school-based, cross-community contact initiatives with children of other ethnic/national groups.

Northern Ireland

Due in large part to the significant differences in the type and scale of violence in the two regions, the impact of the conflict on education appears to be less obvious in Northern Ireland than in Bosnia and Herzegovina. While generally speaking, participating children and young people's day-to-day schooling was largely unaffected by the Troubles, it could be argued that the existence of separate schools is itself a product of the historical conflict in Northern Ireland.¹⁴

While their education may have been disrupted less by the Troubles than in Bosnia and Herzegovina, some reference was made to what could be regarded as the indirect impacts of the conflict. The **fear** and **suspicion** which many people in Northern Irish society still feel about disclosing their identity to someone they do not know and therefore cannot trust seems to transfer into the school environment. As a result, in mixed groups some children were afraid to disclose their religious, cultural or political identities for fear of becoming victims of religious or sectarian bullying travelling to and from school. One respondent suggested that the conflict provided school bullies with a convenient excuse to intimidate their peers.

"I think some people just do it to cause trouble, you know? Like I wouldn't say that was what they actually think if they really sat down and thought about it... It is only because they try to look big or look cool or something... if they start

bullying someone... they just use religion as a thing to use..."

16 year old female, Northern Ireland

Equally, for security reasons some children were instructed by their parents not to reveal sensitive personal information to their classmates, for example children with a parent in the RUC or Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).

However, while for the adult respondents (24-25 age group) it was possible to exercise some control over whether to reveal or withhold sensitive personal information (for example, relating to one's religious or political identity) in the workplace, it proved much more challenging for many of the children and young people still at school. In many cases they have no option but to wear a school uniform which is identifiable through colours, badges and symbols associated with unionist or nationalist; Protestant or Catholic communities. Several respondents complained that their school uniform, as well as certain sporting equipment (for example camogie sticks, as in the case below) made them potential targets for sectarian bullying and intimidation in particular areas.¹⁵ Indeed one respondent's support for integrated education stemmed primarily from a desire to be able to wear a 'neutral' school uniform which would make him less vulnerable to sectarian attacks on the walk home from school.

"Well whenever I was at school, if I went down the town in my school uniform you were pinpointed by 'oh, let's get him' or 'let's give him

¹⁴ See, for example, Smith, A., Religious Segregation and the Emergence of Integrated Schools in Northern Ireland, *Oxford Review of Education*, Vol. 27, No. 4, 2001, pp.559-75.

¹⁵ Camogie is a Gaelic team sport played with a curved stick or *camóg* and a ball. The women's variant of *hurling*, it is mostly played in Catholic schools.

a hiding’... not because I was from the Fountain, but because I was wearing that particular uniform... and I just think if there was a fifty/fifty [integrated school], they are not going to know who is who, you know. I think it would really, really help.”

16 year old male, Northern Ireland

“There was always a fear there, and then we all played camogie, so carrying our camogie sticks into town, you know... town was a big place, as well, where people were afraid.”

25 year old female, Northern Ireland

Although their day-to-day schooling was not really disrupted by the Troubles, several respondents recalled adverse reactions within their schools among their teachers to various political developments, such as when Gerry Adams was successful in obtaining a visa to travel to the U.S.¹⁶, or when Martin McGuinness became Education Minister in the Stormont Executive.¹⁷ At the Irish-language secondary school attended by one respondent in Belfast, the wider political context in which the campaign for Irish-language schooling was taking place was regularly discussed.

“I can remember one teacher talking about... I think it might have been a time Gerry Adams was allowed a visa to the States, and kind of displaying his disgust at that.”

25 year old male, Northern Ireland

“I remember there being a bit of an outcry about, like, Martin McGuinness, ex-terrorist, being an Education Minister... oh let’s have all, like, a big walk-out of school... But I went to a very polite middle-class school and we went down to the gates, and the headmaster just had to stand there, and we were all back in our classes within a couple of minutes, you know... So I don’t really think it hit that it was a big thing, it was just like something, just another wee phase, you know, it wasn’t going to make a big difference to us.”

24 year old female, Northern Ireland

“Of course, when you go to the secondary school, I can remember to a larger extent but it was more to do with the Irish language... more to do with the central thing that there had been a political campaign effectively to give recognition for the school. And it wasn’t only about language or raising cultural awareness, it was more about human rights. It was effectively about the effect that nationalists and republicans from the outset of the Northern Ireland state had been a non-people, so the Irish language was a non-language, so... that would have been constantly talked about...”

24 year old male, Northern Ireland

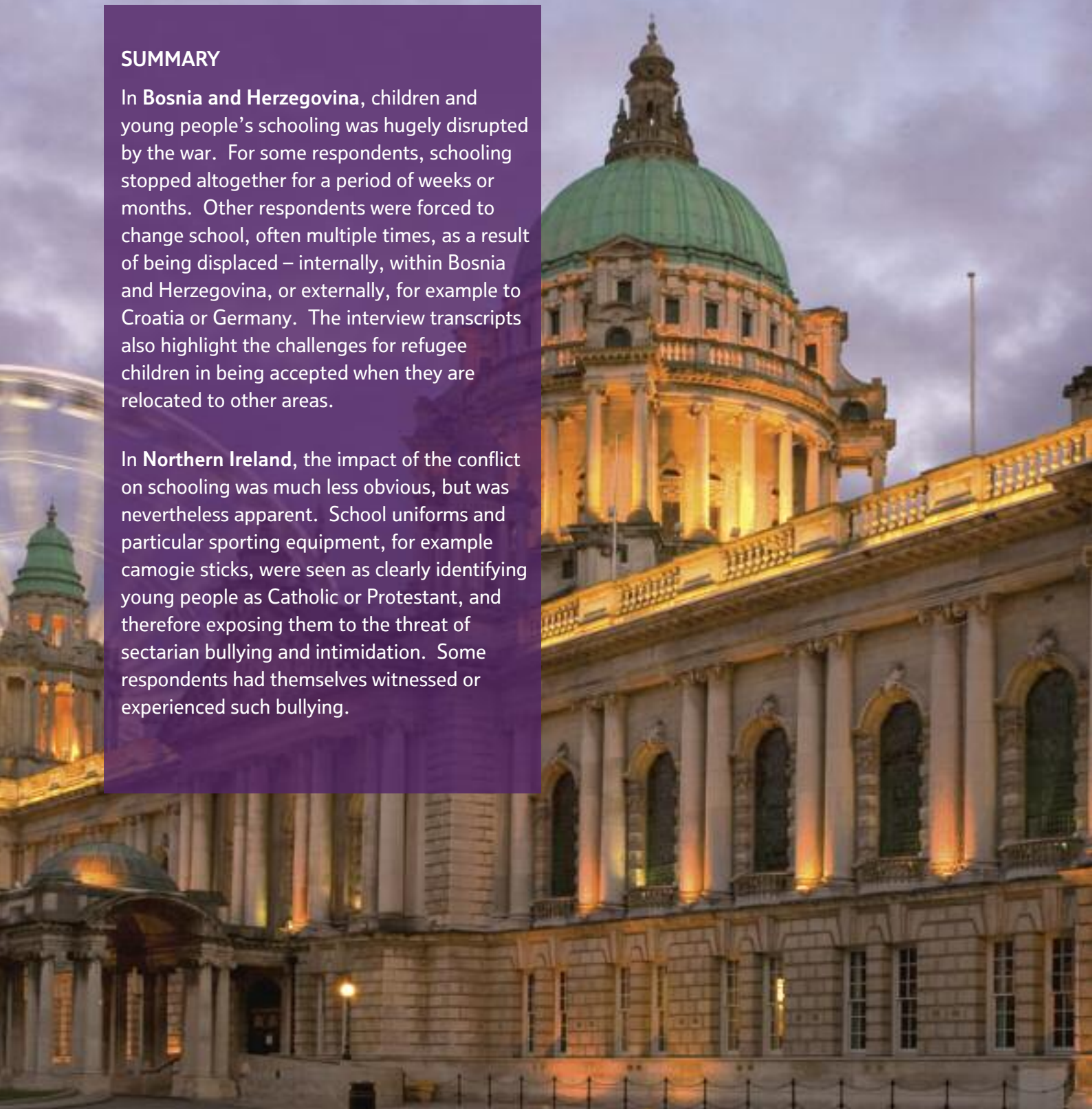
¹⁶ In 1994, Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams was granted a visa to travel to the U.S.A. Previous to this, the United States Government prohibited him from travelling to the U.S.A. stating that the reason was his alleged support for Irish Republican Army (IRA) violence.

¹⁷ In 1999, hundreds of school pupils staged walk-outs after Martin McGuinness was appointed Minister for Education in the new power-sharing executive in Stormont. See <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/imported/politicians-call-for-end-to-mcguinness-protests-13763253.html>.

SUMMARY

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, children and young people's schooling was hugely disrupted by the war. For some respondents, schooling stopped altogether for a period of weeks or months. Other respondents were forced to change school, often multiple times, as a result of being displaced – internally, within Bosnia and Herzegovina, or externally, for example to Croatia or Germany. The interview transcripts also highlight the challenges for refugee children in being accepted when they are relocated to other areas.

In **Northern Ireland**, the impact of the conflict on schooling was much less obvious, but was nevertheless apparent. School uniforms and particular sporting equipment, for example camogie sticks, were seen as clearly identifying young people as Catholic or Protestant, and therefore exposing them to the threat of sectarian bullying and intimidation. Some respondents had themselves witnessed or experienced such bullying.



Understanding of conflict

Understanding of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina

During the interviews respondents were asked how they would explain the war to a person from another country. Many respondents found the question difficult to answer at first. Several respondents commented that they themselves did not fully understand why the war had happened, and as such would find it difficult to explain the war to an outsider. Indeed one respondent stated bluntly that she would not explain the war to a foreigner. One respondent in the 24-25 age group remarked that it was impossible to understand war unless you had yourself lived through one. Several respondents in the 16-18 age group felt that they would not be able to explain the war because they were too young at the time and had no memories of it, emphasising that, from their point of view, the war was in the distant past. One respondent suggested that rather than attempting to explain the war herself, she would instead turn to someone older who had lived through the war (for example, a parent) to explain it – or, better still, to several older people, to reflect a range of experiences and perspectives. Another respondent similarly stressed the need for objectivity when explaining the war, suggesting consulting resources on the issue, which might be less subjective than individual people's attempts to explain the war.

“How would I explain what happened [laughter]... The worst thing is that I do not even know what happened. I only know that there

were conflicts between different nationalities, and that's it...”

17 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Well, I would say that it was a terrible period, that the victims were innocent people... mostly children and elderly people... That people were forced to fight - like my father, for example... That we were refugees, meaning we had to go and find shelter... And after the war, some people did not even come back to their homes. There are people from Bosnia and Herzegovina in every corner of the world. I would say something like that.”

16 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Frankly, I don't know. It is hard to understand unless... unless you have experienced similar situations. I mean, well, someone who was already in a war could understand it... say someone in another part of the world, I guess. Those who have not felt and experienced war cannot create the image that you want to create for them, that you want to present...”

24 year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Generally speaking, respondents found it difficult to point to any one reason as the cause of the war, suggesting that a combination of factors had led to the outbreak of war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Most, particularly in the 24-25 and 16-18 age groups, made reference to nationalism and a desire for independence as reasons for the war. Several respondents also mentioned economics, ethnicity, religion and politics. More than half of the respondents in the oldest age group, as well as two respondents in the 16-18 age group, felt that politicians, rather than “common people”, were to blame for the war. One respondent blamed the

mixing of religion and politics for Bosnia and Herzegovina's problems. Another respondent remarked that common people were merely "puppets" manipulated by politicians, who stirred up nationalistic sentiment which led to the war. One eleven year old respondent echoed views expressed by those in the older age groups when she remarked that politicians' talk was divisive and had contributed to the bitterness of the people in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

"Well, I think that simply they wanted to divide Bosnia and Herzegovina, or actually to attach half of it to Serbia and later to attach the other part – Herzegovina – to Croatia."

24 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"They [politicians] used religion as a reason to bring war on us."

25 year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"We were only puppets, led by some nationalistic... stupid thoughts."

25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"It was all started by the government. For sure, common people did not have anything to do with it. Karadžić and Mladić¹⁸ are responsible for all that... common people do not have anything to do with it... But common people believed what they were watching on TV, the same as they do now with gossip magazines..."

17 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Two thirds of respondents in the oldest age group appeared to find the war

incomprehensible, using terms such as "stupid", "needless", and "absurd". Two respondents alluded to the inevitability of war in Bosnia, remarking that war had always been a feature of Balkan history. In direct contrast to this, another respondent suggested that war in Bosnia and Herzegovina was not inevitable and could have been "sorted out in some other way", making reference to events in other countries such as Czechoslovakia. Many believed that the war could have been avoided, and that it had achieved nothing except widespread death and destruction. Even among the youngest age group, some respondents seemed to feel that the war was unnecessary and could have been prevented, with one eleven year old remarking that "everything could have been resolved through discussion".

"For me, it is absurd. Even today I do not understand... I mean, it does not make sense. I do not know... I do not try to explain it to anyone."

25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"Even now, I think that it is so stupid to kill so many people over a piece of land... I do not know. It is so hard for me to understand, because...it is just a piece of land."

24 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Unsurprisingly, of the three age groups interviewed, respondents in the oldest age group, 24-25 year olds, tended to have the most sophisticated understanding of the causes of the war. Several of the respondents in the 16-18

¹⁸ Radovan Karadžić was the first President of Republika Srpska from 1992 to 1996. He was a fugitive from 1996 until July 2008 after having been indicted for war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal of the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) for war crimes, including genocide against Bosnian Muslim (Bosniak) and Bosnian Croat civilians during the Bosnian War (1992-1995). Ratko Mladić was the Chief of Staff of the Army of the Republika Srpska (the Bosnian Serb Army) during the Bosnian War. There has been an outstanding international arrest warrant against Mladić following his indictment by the ICTY for war crimes, including genocide.

age group reported that they were unsure of the causes of the war because they were “too young at the time”. One respondent said that the “reasons for war are very difficult to define”, while another claimed to be “confused”, remarking that “everybody is telling a different story”. Others struggled to articulate their understanding of the causes of the war, appearing to find the war incomprehensible. A third of respondents in this age group reported that young people their age were not interested in talking about the war. Three of the eleven year old respondents similarly reported that they were not interested in talking, or learning, about the war. One respondent commented that some young people of her age in Bosnia and Herzegovina were intolerant of other religions and perpetuated tensions and conflict between religious and ethnic groups without really understanding why they were doing it.

“I, personally, as a young person am not interested in that [the war]. I have my own concerns, my life. That happened... What happened, I do not care.”

17 year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“We are not really interested in that [the war] because we young people prefer to look towards the future rather than look at the past... so we are not that well informed...”

16 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Some [young people] are not that interested and they just overhear things and say ‘I know that it happened’... Very few young people know exactly what happened [during the war]. Some are not interested...”

16 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Of the three age groups interviewed, the eleven year olds were least sure about the causes of the war. None of the respondents interviewed in either Banja Luka (Republika Srpska) and Nova Bila (a town Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina which was relatively unaffected by the war) knew much about the war or why it had occurred. One respondent remembered hearing about the war but claimed not to really believe it had happened, while others were aware that a war had taken place but that it had not affected their area.

“I think it happened because everyone wanted to have their own country.”

Eleven year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Some people have said something that it [the war] happened, but I don’t know. I don’t believe that.”

Eleven year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Well, I heard that one city and another city were in war with each other, I don’t know why. But I know our region – Banja Luka/Krajina – was not in the war. But in other cities, yes.”

Eleven year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“It didn’t really happen here in my country [Republika Srpska], but elsewhere.”

Eleven year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Understanding of the Troubles in Northern Ireland

During the interviews respondents were asked how they would explain the Troubles to a person from another country. Many respondents found this question difficult to answer at first. One respondent felt that the conflict sounded “childish” when it was explained to an outsider. Several respondents in the 16-18 age group commented that they did not feel qualified to explain the conflict to an outsider. One respondent felt that his analysis of the conflict would be subjective and that it was best for outsiders to hear both sides of the story. Several respondents appeared to find the conflict incomprehensible – shameful, even – describing it using terms such as “idiocy” and “just rubbish”. One eleven year old respondent felt the conflict was “completely stupid”:

“I got asked that quite a lot, but it is always very hard to explain because... when people ask it is often sort of because they have seen things on the news and are sort of: ‘aren’t all these people just mad?’ kind of thing... ‘Isn’t this just senseless and random?’ And it is not random. But it is hard to explain that it has a history and it is not just, you know, a bunch of psychos randomly beating each other up, without sounding like you are defending it...”
25 year old female, Northern Ireland

“I am aware that it started in the seventies and that was when the Troubles started, and a lot of it was to do with the police and Sinn Féin, I think...? Probably wrong... It kind of is really

hard to explain, because I don’t think that anyone truly knows, you know, like... where it actually started from.”

24 year old female, Northern Ireland

“I don’t really know how to explain it... I don’t. I don’t... it is idiocy and it is shameful...”

25 year old male, Northern Ireland

Two thirds of respondents in the 24-25 age group, and just three respondents in the 16-18 age group, made reference to politics - or to territorial disputes - when considering the causes of the Troubles. A larger number of the younger respondents believed that religion was the main cause of the Troubles. A third of respondents in the 24-25 age group and almost two third of respondents in the 16-18 age group felt that religion had a part to play. Indeed, one indicated that this almost went without saying when she referred to divisions “obviously caused by religion”. However, another respondent rejected the notion that the Troubles were caused by religious division, remarking that “Protestants didn’t shoot Catholics because of their belief in transubstantiation”.¹⁹

“The nationalists would like a republic Ireland and the unionists want to keep Northern Ireland as part of Great Britain. That is what it is all coming down to, so it is.”

24 year old male, Northern Ireland

“I would just say one side is Catholic and the other side is Protestant... that is why they fight each other, that is what I would say...”

25 year old male, Northern Ireland

¹⁹ Belief in transubstantiation (the change of the substance of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ occurring in the Eucharist) is one of the distinguishing features between the Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches.

Two respondents saw the conflict as increasingly being class-based rather than religion-based.

“I think that a large part of it is just the social divide now, more than anything else...”
25 year old female, Northern Ireland

“To me it is a not a religion thing, to me it is a class thing...”
25 year old female, Northern Ireland

A third of respondents in the oldest age group made some reference to the civil rights movement, and to past discriminatory employment practises, as factors which contributed to the conflict in Northern Ireland. Three respondents felt that politicians and governments were partly to blame for the conflict. One respondent from Derry/Londonderry felt that Bloody Sunday was an important factor in the start of the Troubles.²⁰ Several respondents made reference to the historic roots of the conflict. For example, one respondent mentioned the importance of historic events such as the Reformation and the Ulster Plantations. One respondent alluded to what he saw as the inevitability of violent conflict in Ireland, remarking that it had always been a feature of Irish history. In contrast, another respondent expressed frustration with what she saw as a tendency to delve deep into history to explain or justify the Troubles. More often, however, respondents' responses reflected the perception that the situation was complex and that a combination of factors had led to the Troubles; indeed one respondent described the situation as “messy”. Another respondent spoke

about not having a strong view on the causes of the Troubles because he felt he could understand both sides' points of view.

“Aahh, it is so complex! [laughter]”
25 year old female, Northern Ireland

“To be honest, I think there are so many different aspects to it, you know... There's so many different strands to it... I don't know what I would do if I had to, kind of, pinpoint one thing or, you know, try to figure out one cause for it.”
24 year old female, Northern Ireland

“The reality is that... how people understand it now is probably not true. You know, they say there's three truths... your truth, my truth, and the truth... But the realities behind the situation, I think, have been lost, and they've been politicised, and they've been used for one side against the other, so... Messy, I suppose, would be my view... There's too much has gone on, I think, to be able to be able to be too definitive about it.”
25 year old male, Northern Ireland

“The easiest way to explain it would be about it primarily being about the interaction of people between these islands, between Britain and Ireland, and the religious and social and economic circumstances that led to that interaction... I think it was a natural consequence of geography, of the economy, of religion.”
25 year old male, Northern Ireland

²⁰ Bloody Sunday refers to an incident on 30 January 1972 in which 27 civilians were shot by members of the 1st Battalion of the British Parachute Regiment during a Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) march. Thirteen people died immediately. The death of another person months later was attributed to the injuries he received on that day.

Eight respondents in the 16-18 age group reported that they were unsure or confused about the causes of the conflict in Northern Ireland. One respondent felt it was all to do with the paramilitaries. Another respondent said that he didn't "know a wild lot about it", while others expressed similar confusion and disinterest. Indeed over a third of respondents in this age group reported that young people their age were not interested in the Troubles. One respondent remarked that she did not think young people her age were interested in the Troubles because it was "so long ago". Two respondents in this age group commented that the conflict was being perpetuated by teenagers who did not understand what it was about.

"Most of the time I was just really confused as to why religion would be such a big thing to argue over... I just don't understand it at all."
18 year old female, Northern Ireland

"I don't know what happened at all, I really don't have a clue. It just sort of happened. I am quite confused about it."
18 year old female, Northern Ireland

"Just the paramilitaries are all arguing with each other about nothings... just about wee stupid things."
16 year old female, Northern Ireland

"I think some [young people] are interested, yeah... and then others, like, just think it is boring."
17 year old male, Northern Ireland

"Well I am not interested at all in any of it."
17 year old male, Northern Ireland

Of the three age groups interviewed, respondents in the oldest age group, 24-25 year olds, tended to have the most sophisticated understanding of the causes of the Troubles, while the majority of the eleven year olds were least sure about the causes of the Troubles. Many of the eleven year olds interviewed in Northern Ireland indicated that they were either confused or not sure about why the conflict had started. Indeed more than half of the respondents in this youngest age group demonstrated a lack of general awareness concerning the Troubles. Almost two thirds of them believed that the Troubles were caused by religion. However several others seemed confused as to how religion could cause conflict. Four respondents in this age group associated the Troubles with football. When asked how the fighting might have started, one respondent in a small group interview replied: "It was the football teams". Another respondent added, "Celtic and Rangers", and later said: "They started fighting about which team is the better". Only one respondent demonstrated an awareness of the political roots of the conflict. Her grandfather was a history teacher and they had spoken about the Troubles.

"I really don't know much. I don't really know quite anything about it..."
Eleven year old male, Northern Ireland

"Like, different religions. And, like, they just clashed, and stuff like that. But I don't really know that much about it."
Eleven year old female, Northern Ireland

"I just think it is completely stupid... alright, different people have different opinions... so

they shouldn't, like, fight over it. Me and my best friend, we have never fought over something so stupid as that! It is just weird. Who would fight over that [religion]?"
Eleven year old female, Northern Ireland

"I think most of the troubles are about ball games, like Glentoran and Rangers, and also what religion you are, like Catholic and Protestant..."
Eleven year old female, Northern Ireland

"Well I know that some people want to be part of the south of Ireland and some people want to be part of the United Kingdom and that there has been a lot of conflict going on... and I know about places like Stormont and where it is like the Prime Minister comes to visit and stuff like that..."

Eleven year old female, Northern Ireland

A minority of respondents in both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Northern Ireland believed that war and conflict were almost inevitable in their respective regions. Two respondents from Bosnia and Herzegovina remarked that war had always been a feature of Balkan history. A respondent from Northern Ireland similarly argued that conflict and bloodshed had always been features of Irish history.

"I think that looking at the history, Bosnia as a country went through wars every fifty years, and I have a feeling it is going to repeat. I mean, that is what history shows us [laughter], we are destined to have it that way. I do not know, I always think when I look at the map and see our location that everything from both east and west passes through our country, and everything

breaks over us."

24 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"There have been wars in the Balkans since the very beginning, starting with the Battle of Kosovo [in 1398], and even before... The Balkans have always been conflicted."

17 year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"I mean, Irish history is a cycle of violence, of uprisings followed by a bit of peace followed by uprisings followed by a bit of peace, and hopefully we're at the end of it now. I suppose that's it that cyclical nature... The conflict's been going probably eight hundred years, not thirty years, arguably."

24 year old male, Northern Ireland

SUMMARY

In general, respondents in both Northern Ireland and Bosnia and Herzegovina struggled to explain the conflict in their region. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, nationalism and a desire for independence were the most frequently cited reasons for the war. In Northern Ireland, the picture was less clear, with respondents citing a combination of political, religious and historic roots of the conflict. In both regions, respondents described the conflict using terms such as "stupid", "absurd" and "shameful".

In both regions, respondents in the oldest age group tended to have the most sophisticated understanding of the causes of the conflict. The eleven year olds in both regions were least sure about the causes of the conflict. Most of the eleven year olds interviewed in Northern Ireland believed that the Troubles were caused by religion.

Sources of awareness and understanding of conflict

Bosnia and Herzegovina

When discussing when and how they had learned (and/or continued to learn) about the war, the oldest age group in Bosnia and Herzegovina mentioned learning about it while the war was ongoing (when they were aged between roughly nine to thirteen years); after the war had ended (while they were still attending school); and in the present day (when they are in their mid-twenties). Several respondents in this age group reported that they talked with their **parents and family** about what was happening during the war. Some remembered advice they received from their parents in order to keep them safe during, and after, the war.

“As kids, we played ‘hide and seek’... and mothers and fathers would run outside and tell us to go back inside. I remember that. And I know that we were told not to go anywhere and that parents were nervous...”

24 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

With regard to the present day, three respondents in this age group said they do not speak about the war within their family. One of these respondents mentioned how, in spite of his physical scars, her father never spoke about his experience of being detained in a refugee camp during the war. Three respondents in this age group reported that they rarely, if ever, spoke about the war with their friends nowadays. Two

respondents actively avoided mentioning the war in conversation.

More generally, parents and, to a lesser extent, grandparents were identified as influential in shaping children and young people’s awareness and understanding of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. One respondent in the 16-18 age group highlighted the importance of initiating an intergenerational dialogue about the war.

“If we are talking about it [the war], then no one should be excluded. Everyone should be working together, rather than one generation knowing about it and another not... Every generation should know about the crisis their country used to be in.”

17 year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Sometimes discussion about the war was initiated by the children and young people themselves, who were curious to learn more. Other times respondents picked up bits and pieces of information from stories told to them by their parents, as well as from overhearing conversations among older family and community members. The comments of the 16-18 year olds in Bosnia and Herzegovina highlight that although the war is spoken about within the family, it remains a difficult topic of conversation for the older generation (parents and grandparents) as well as for some young adults who lived through the war. Indeed one respondent commented that she did not ask her family about the war because she herself did not want to remember it.

“Very often our parents talk to us about what happened. Every family was affected by war in

some way. Some lost family members... The same is true with my family as well. That is why they often sit with my brothers and me to talk about it."

17 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"My father yes, but my mother no. My mother won't even hear about it, and my father yes. He tells some of those war stories, about what they survived..."

18 year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"Well, it affected him [her father], but he did not want to tell us about it. I mean, he has scars all over his body..."

25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"My friends... they know about it [the war] not because they remember it, but mostly based on what their parents told them... so, they hear most of the things within the family."

17 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"Well... I do not ask them a lot about it. I really do not want to remember that period; I do not have a need to talk about it... I do not want to recall a memory of it."

18 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"Well, it is difficult for them so we don't talk about it much... Whenever we try to talk about it, my grandmother and mother start crying, so it is hard to talk about it."

Eleven year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Several respondents remembered the war being discussed at **school** while it was still ongoing. Indeed one commented that "of course" war was discussed at school since "it was part of our

lives". Some respondents felt they had benefited from the opportunity to write about their experiences, for example in essays for Serbian or Bosnian language class. With regard to the ethnic tensions which characterised the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, one respondent reported that it was "only when the war started" that "differences began to show in the school, starting with religion as a subject in the curriculum". Indeed several respondents commented that before the war they were unaware what ethnicity/nationality they belonged to.

More than half of the respondents in this age group said that the war was not explained to them when they were at school. Respondents' comments allude to fact that teachers may have felt it inappropriate to discuss the war with young, primary-age children and were more concerned with the safety of their pupils than explaining to them how the war had come about.

"War was mostly mentioned during language class... Bosnian language, especially. I mean, everyone lived through it, and usually everybody wrote [in essays] about what they found hardest... If someone lost a member of their family, someone got injured... That is how it came up..."

25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"The teachers, who were participants [in the war], they did not know what to say to us... Believe me... no one explained what was happening."

24 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“We were still children, so they [teachers] did not want to talk with us about that [the war].”

24 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“I think that they [teachers] did not talk about that [the war]... they were more concentrated on helping if someone was in a bad situation... without food, without clothes, and then everyone collected things for them... let's help... visit the parents, check what they need...”

24 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Several respondents reported that the war was addressed at post-primary level, when the war was over.

“There was talk about the war [in secondary school], but everyone has their own view and understanding of why the war happened, and how... We exchanged points of view.”

25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

However in direct contrast to this, one respondent said that war was not addressed in school after it ended, perhaps because it was no longer part of the everyday lives of pupils and teachers.

“When I went to secondary school, the war was over and it was no longer talked about...”

24 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovinas

With regard to how the war is currently being addressed in school, several respondents in the 16-18 age group mentioned learning about the war in specific subjects, for example History, Geography or Democracy and Human Rights class. Almost half of the respondents in this age group believed that the war was not adequately addressed in class.

“I learned some [about the war] in History class... sometimes some of the teachers mentioned something... just information, like when the Dayton Agreement was signed, when the one in Paris was signed, etc.”

17 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“We learn about it [reconciliation] in Democracy and Human Rights class. We learned a lot about the war, and other things.”

16 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“In school it is covered through different subjects, for example we now have Democracy and Human Rights as a subject in school... In that class we discuss the situation in the country, civil rights etc... Do we learn about the war [in school]? No. But it is always threaded through different subjects... Democracy and Human Rights is the subject we can discuss it in most. In the second semester we will address the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina directly, and we will definitely pay more attention to it. But generally it is discussed, especially since the consequences of the war can still be felt... and that is why the word ‘war’ is constantly present.”

17 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“We do not learn about the war that much in school. In history class, we learned about wars in general, and the causes of war... who wins in the end.”

17 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“In History class we have to learn about wars, but nothing directly about this [most recent] one.”

18 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Only some individual teachers talk about it [the war]. Sometimes they mention it, but it is not discussed as much as it should be.”

16 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Two respondents alluded to the fact that different versions of history are now being taught, both at school and at university. One respondent said that, in her experience, the war was not addressed at university, saying that rather than dwelling on what happened in the past, her economics course was “more focused on what to do to make things better”.

“In History classes we learn more our... about Croats. I mean, Muslims are mentioned, but it is more about us [Croats].”

16 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“I have heard that a few different versions of history have been written... There are about four or five textbooks about the war... everyone is writing their own [version]... Everyone who wrote a book looked at things from their own perspective, so the books do not they match in certain ways, and in others they do not. I have not read any, but I have heard about it...”

25 year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Almost all the respondents in the oldest age group made reference to the influence of **the media** in shaping people’s attitudes to each other during the war. Most mentioned television; however some respondents also mentioned radio (“when the electricity was on”) as well as newspapers as sources of information during the war. Several respondents pointed to the media’s negative focus during the war, highlighting the stories of those who had died,

rather than those who had escaped and survived.

“Everyone was informed [about the war, during the war] via the media... The news never started with good stories... so, nothing about how people escape and survived, but only how they died...”

24 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Even though I was a child, I knew... I knew that there was bombing going on. We had a TV and we could see. There were reports from different cities... They were Croatian programmes, but they always had reports on Mostar and other cities around Bosnia and Herzegovina.”

25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Almost all the respondents in the oldest age group made reference to the media’s influence in shaping people’s understandings of the war and its aftermath, for example current coverage of the trials of war criminals, etc. One respondent felt that she was more aware of the war now because of the media’s focus on these trials. Another respondent remarked that she avoided watching television programmes about the war and war crimes trials “because it is so painful”.

“Today it [the war] is all the time in the media, because of trials and catching the war criminals.”

25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“I think we are more aware of it [the war] now, with all those trials and proceedings taking place... what people went through.”

24 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“I don’t know much about the war, but I know as much as I have seen on TV... for example, about how they are burying people in mass graves. I don’t think they should be left in these mass graves, but each person should be buried with dignity. I have thought a lot about all of this and I have realised that people suffered a lot, and there was a lot of pain...”

Eleven year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

However a respondent in the 16-18 age group had a different perspective, commenting that the media tended to focus more on current, ongoing conflicts abroad.

“The media are not covering the past that much... they speak only about current events... what is happening elsewhere in the world, like Iraq...”

17 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

One significant difference between the three age groups interviewed in Bosnia and Herzegovina with regard to where their awareness and understanding of the war comes from is that most of the respondents in the oldest age group, 24-25 year olds, commented that their knowledge about the conflict came from direct **personal experience**. This is not surprising, given that in 1992, when the war broke out, they were nine or ten years of age and were thus old enough to at least be aware of, if not actually understand, what was happening around them.

“Regarding knowing about what happened during the war... I know from my own experience.”

25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Reality. I was in the war... lived it from the first until the last day. I saw everything... I saw my friends and family members die. My father was wounded twice.”

25 year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

However many respondents commented that they were too young to really be understand what was happening during and immediately after the war; indeed one respondent commented that when her family was displaced “it was practically like going on holidays because you are not really aware of things”. It was only later, when they were slightly older that they really began to understand what had happened. One respondent in the 24-25 age group pointed to the importance of personal experience in shaping understanding of the war, observing that, inevitably, the younger generation’s understanding of the war would be different to his own generation, who had lived through the war. Respondents in the two younger groups did not cite personal experience when they spoke about how their awareness and understanding of the war had developed. Indeed a third of the 16-18 year olds said they had few, if any, memories of the war because they were too young when it happened to remember.

“We were children and again we were not... actually we were not aware... we did not understand much.”

24 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Two respondents in this age group mentioned talking to **friends** about the war during the war. In contrast, two respondents said that they had not talked about the war with her friends.

“When you are a child of that age, you do not talk about that [war] with your friends, and you do not know a lot about it.”

25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Northern Ireland

Adults – particularly **parents**, but also grandparents, aunts and uncles, and teachers – were an important source of information about the Troubles. More than half of the respondents in the 24-25 and 16-18 age groups mentioned speaking to their parents or family about the Troubles on occasion. A third of respondents in the 24-25 and 16-18 age groups commented that during the Troubles and more recent instances of civil disorder, their parents sometimes spoke to them about the conflict in order to keep them safe – for example, to advise them to stay out of particular areas, especially during the marching season, or to be wary of particular people in their areas. One respondent, who lived in an area that was experiencing feuding between rival loyalist paramilitary groups around the time of the interview, spoke about conversations she had had with her father about the situation. Her uncle, who was himself actively involved in a loyalist paramilitary organisation, had spoken to her about the paramilitaries, advising her not to join. One eleven year old respondent remarked that his mother would not let him near a road in the village where there was an Orange Order march taking place. Some parents also advised their children to steer clear of conversation about Catholic and Protestant “stuff” in order to avoid offending others and to stay safe.

“I remember as well there always being soldiers on the street and they would have let... some children would have went over and they would have let them look down their gun and, you know, the wee eye piece and all. But Mum and Dad always had us warned, like, never go near them. Because if somebody took a shot at them and you were in the way...”

25 year old female, Northern Ireland

“These big men would just have walked up and told you to move and you just moved, nobody sort of went: ‘Well why?’. Everybody just went: ‘OK, OK’ and just moved... And I would go home and ask: ‘Who are these people?’ and Mum would have said: ‘Just don’t give them any bother, do as you are told... just come home if you feel uncomfortable’. And I suppose that is probably why I am still a bit... I really don’t know who is who in that estate and I know that friends of mine would be very informed about what is happening and who is who and who is involved in what and... but I wasn’t, fortunately.”

25 year old female, Northern Ireland

Several respondents recalled their parents’ efforts to explain conflict-related issues to their children in clear and simple terms. One respondent said he “would have asked them [his parents] just simple questions, really, so that I could piece things together”. Again highlighting the importance of grandparents in the transmission of knowledge about the conflict, one of the eleven year old respondents reported learning about the Troubles from her grandfather, a history teacher. Other respondents’ comments implied a frustration with their parents’ inability to explain the conflict

to them. For example, one respondent recalled that when he asked his parents what the Troubles were about, “the only answer they ever really gave me was the English shooting about the place... that was the only answer I ever got”.

“They would have went through all the stories and stuff about whenever they were younger, how long it happened... I can’t really remember, but it was more or less just: ‘I am a Protestant and I am from a Protestant community, and over the fence are nationalists...’ And... they tried to explain to me more about politics and... how the whole fighting was going on and stuff. But that was all I really can remember.”

16 year old male, Northern Ireland

“I would say eighty, ninety percent of people my age learn about it from their parents, and their views are developed from what their parents tell them and show them and allow them to see... Because I know that my views are the way that they are because my Mum and Dad never spoke about, you know: ‘You can’t see this person, you can’t talk to that person, they are bad because... they are good because...’ And certainly the view in our house would have been the people that are bad are the people that are bombing and the people that are shooting and the people are doing this... they are the bad people, whether they are Catholic or Protestants or not, they are the bad people.”

24 year old female, Northern Ireland

“I remember my brother, my eldest brother... somebody had said to him that his Mummy was an ‘orangie’ in school... and he came around home and said: ‘Mummy, what is an ‘orangie’?’ And she said: ‘It is just somebody who comes

from the Protestant community... makes nobody any different.’ You know... she was great at dealing with stuff like that.”

25 year old female, Northern Ireland

Some respondents recalled stories their parents had told them about life before, and during, the Troubles. For example, the aunt of one respondent had spoken to her about when the ‘peace walls’ were erected in Belfast. The parents of another respondent had told him how “the army was always stopping them” and about bombings, “like the Claudy bombing or something like that”. Another respondent was very interested in learning about the Troubles, and often asked her father about it.

“Well, I don’t ask my Mummy a wild pile lot. I would just say to my Daddy, like: ‘Why is there a couple of IRAs’, like... because there is all splinter groups. And I would say, like: ‘What is the difference between the Continuity and the Provisional IRA’ and what they support and all this here... just sort of questions like that.”

16 year old female, Northern Ireland

However while some parents spoke to their children about their experiences during the Troubles, other parents were reticent to talk about the past. Several respondents reported that they had not really spoken to their parents or family members about the conflict in Northern Ireland. Two thirds of respondents in the 24-25 age group spoke about how their parents sometimes avoided talking about the Troubles with their children. One respondent mentioned that he knew a republican who had served a life sentence in prison, but had never told his children, who were born after his release, about

his imprisonment. Another respondent similarly spoke about her family's silence concerning an uncle's links with the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

"No, I never really asked them. It was just something that they wouldn't really talk to me about, like. So no, I just never sort of knew..."
17 year old male, Northern Ireland

"I was only a child and I suppose my Mum and Dad didn't want to say too much to us."
25 year old female, Northern Ireland

"No one will confirm it that one of my mother's brothers spent a bit of time inside for helping out the IRA... but no one will confirm it because it is, just again... that is not spoken about at all."

25 year old female, Northern Ireland

"There was never politics talked about, spoke about in our family, never. We didn't really know anything about it. All I knew was if we were leaving Twinbrook to go to Lisburn, we got stopped by the soldiers, and everybody taken out of the car and put back in again, you know... We had soldiers in our gardens and laughed when they looked through our curtain [laughs], you know. We never knew anything politically... we didn't know if they were bad or good. And I feel so lucky for that, you know... opinions were never pushed on us and politics was never pushed on us, so no, she [her mother] would never have spoke about it..."

24 year old female, Northern Ireland

Several respondents in the oldest age group reflected on the potential for parents to have a

positive influence on children's attitudes towards members of the 'other' community background. However respondents in both the 24-25 and 16-18 age groups also acknowledged the potential for parents to negatively influence their children's attitudes.

Several respondents recalled how **teachers** had spoken to them about the conflict in order to keep them safe and out of harm's way. For example, one respondent recalled a teacher's attempts to persuade some of the boys in his class against becoming involved with the paramilitaries.

"A teacher at school... I remember him talking to the boys, you know, trying to tell them to wise up because it [becoming involved with the paramilitaries] was only going to lead to bad things and all this carry on. And the actual ones he was talking to was the ones that was shot dead, so it was. So it was a bit mad, like that there. I couldn't believe it, like, because I reckon he was telling... you know, trying to tell them to get out of here..."

25 year old male, Northern Ireland

Another respondent, who had recently moved to Northern Ireland from Mozambique, said that the teachers at her new school in Belfast had tried to explain the situation here to her in order to help her settle in to her new surroundings.

"In Ireland, when I first came in this school they [teachers] told me that this is a troubled country.... They are just giving you a head start, so that you know what you are getting yourself into... I found that helpful because I knew what to say in front of people and what not to say."
18 year old female, Northern Ireland

With regard to learning about the Troubles in school, respondents in the 16-18 and 24-25 age groups mentioned learning about the conflict in specific **subjects**, for example in Politics, Personal Development, Religion and Language (for example Irish or English Language) and particularly History lessons. Several respondents pointed out that History as a subject was optional, leading to differing levels of awareness and knowledge about the Troubles among pupils at post-primary level.²¹ For example, one remarked that “if you don’t do History, you don’t really learn much [about the conflict]”. Another respondent commented that the difference in approach to the teaching of history in state-controlled and Catholic-maintained schools “is definitely something that is straight away influencing you”. One eleven year old respondent mentioned learning about “Protestants and Catholics” in Religion class.

“I did a wee bit in RE, and a wee bit in History... but they wouldn’t go too much into it, so they wouldn’t.”

17 year old male, Northern Ireland

“Fair enough, you probably know about King Billy and stuff... whatever it is you learned in first year, or whatever it is in history, but that is it. You don’t learn anything else.”

18 year old female, Northern Ireland

“I only done history only up to like third year... So I don’t really know a lot.”

17 year old female, Northern Ireland

“I learned about the Germans... when I was listening. But nothing about the Troubles.”

17 year old female, Northern Ireland

A few respondents felt they had a better understanding of the Troubles than their parents’ and grandparents’ generation because they had learned about it in school.

“They [parents/ grandparents] were brought up not knowing anything because they weren’t being taught it in school the way we are being taught it now. So they don’t... they probably understand it a bit, but they probably don’t understand it to the extent that I do now because they were never taught about it, so they never really knew.”

17 year old male, Northern Ireland

By contrast, two thirds of respondents in the 24-25 age group reported that the Troubles were not adequately addressed when they were at school. Several respondents felt that **teachers** had actively avoided talking about the Troubles in class. One respondent remarked that many of his teachers were from outside the area the school’s main catchment area. This meant that the rioting and violence which were part of the pupils’ daily lives did not affect the teachers to the same extent, and may therefore have influenced their motivation (or lack thereof) to engage with issues related to the Troubles in the classroom. In the 16-18 age group, one respondent reported that “the teacher would talk about it [the conflict] if it came up”. However, some respondents expressed frustration that they were only given the basic

²¹ Since 1990, all young people in Northern Ireland aged 11-14 learn about the historical origins of the ‘two communities’ 1600-1920 from multiple perspectives. The more recent history of the Troubles, however, is only studied by young people who choose to do Northern Ireland History at GCSE level.

facts and teachers left it up to them to undertake their own research if they wanted to learn more. Others reported that they had never really learned about the Troubles at school.

“Not really. We learnt about how Protestants came about, and some guy... Martin Luther something...”

16 year old female, Northern Ireland

“No, no... it was never mentioned by teachers at all. It was just... just too much of a taboo subject.”

24 year old female, Northern Ireland

“I can always remember that in the school, in the primary school the war and the conflict and so on was never talked about. It was never talked about in school... The school had always..., it almost in a way side-stepped any directly talking about politics and its impact... and of course when you are dealing with kids who are directly affected by the conflict, it is always going to be in the undercurrent of what is happening... You had people coming over from the Short Strand and Ardoyne and... at that stage, they were completely war-torn areas and they were coming over and they were going to the school, so... we were always aware of it. I can't remember the teachers ever speaking about it in terms of their own opinions or anything like that.”

25 year old male, Northern Ireland

“I think that there are some people [teachers] who are afraid to talk about it because they are so afraid of hitting a nerve and somebody kicking off or being upset and crying, or they are going to hear something that they maybe don't

want to hear from that person.”

24 year old female, Northern Ireland

“We never really talked about it. It was sort of kept hushed in school, like that there, so it was. It was really... going around the corridors all the time. And there was graffiti around the school, too... I feel then they never bothered because... say people's families who had been in the security forces and shot or whatever, or relatives had been killed... They didn't want to bring it up in classes then, because it would have brought a lot of hurt and probably a lot of problems to that family then. That is why the reason I think they never taught it.”

24 year old male, Northern Ireland

“No, I learned about the history... about Derry's walls and stuff like it... but that was going way back. I didn't learn about Bloody Sunday or any other recent troubles... I would have loved to have learned it.”

16 year old male, Northern Ireland

One respondent was grateful that the Troubles were not addressed directly in class by her teachers.

“I don't remember teachers ever really raising the issue [of the Troubles], which is a positive thing, you know. It was good that it was never seen as sectarian or anything in any way... I think in the time that we were living in... in the nineties and the whole peace process and stuff... I don't know whether if I had have been aware of it [the Troubles], it would have made a massive amount of difference. Because I never really was aware of it, so it didn't have an impact on me.”

25 year old female, Northern Ireland

Several respondents reported learning about the conflict from “talking to people”, “listening to people” and “hearing people chat”. Some respondents’ comments appear to suggest that adults, particularly parents, feel more comfortable talking to children about the Troubles now that the threat of violent conflict in Northern Ireland has diminished.

Several respondents suggested that attitudes regarding the Troubles were influenced not only by the way in which they were raised by their parents, but also *where* children were raised. A majority of the respondents in the 24-25 and 16-18 age groups suggested that the environment or **physical surroundings** in which children grew up, as well as the community in which they lived, had an impact on how their awareness, knowledge and understanding of the conflict developed.

“It is very hard to sort of live in Northern Ireland without being aware... you know, graffiti and people calling names, you know, in the street...”
17 year old male, Northern Ireland

“Knowledge around the conflict would have been... as I say, growing up on the Bogside and seeing all the murals... The likes of the fourteen people shot dead. You don’t really take notice when you’re just running about, but as you get older you start to ask questions. Who’s all those pictures of them boys on the walls? Why’s she there? Bin lids and stuff... the way they used to use the bin lids to let people know the police was coming, they used to bang them... And you just... it’s like, all of a sudden, it’s like a filter... Nothing gets through at the start, and then all of a sudden stuff starts to get through, and more

and more starts to get through...”
25 year old male, Northern Ireland

“It is more their community, so it is... or it is the area you are from.”
24 year old male, Northern Ireland

“When you were in primary school, you always seen the band playing... going about, and you used to copy them in the summer holidays, just running around with your Mum’s saucepans [laughs] around the street... and marching with all your friends, and collecting for the bonfires. Like, everybody all collected for the bonfires.”
24 year old male, Northern Ireland

Over two thirds of all respondents mentioned learning about the Troubles via the **media**, particularly television and, to a lesser extent, radio news and newspapers. One respondent in this age group commented on the negative focus of the media. Several respondents mentioned films they had seen about the Troubles. Two of the eleven year olds were particularly taken with *Mickybo and Me*, a recent film depicting the early days of the Troubles through the eyes of two young boys from Belfast.

“Probably a lot from the news you know, because like you sat at teatime and everybody was sitting down at the table and then after that then the news was on. And then, like my Grandads, you know, they sat down religiously to watch the teatime news and the ten o’clock news, you know. So... everything was always that, you know, political and you were watching the news all the time to see what happens.”
24 year old female, Northern Ireland

“The major incidents... I remember Moira Stewart, the newsreader... BBC newsreader who is no longer on the screens... was talking about the operations in Gibraltar. It think it must have been perhaps in 1989... and of seeing, you know, blurred-out faces on the television... at that time the conflict and the main players seemed so far away, because they are on television... whereas the symbolism, the attitudes and the day-to-day ideology seemed so close to home.”

25 year old male, Northern Ireland

“My mother... she kind of lived for the news, you know. It is that kind of heightened, you know, awareness and anxiety over things... and she always had the news on... and when she was going out in the morning and she was coming home for her lunch at lunchtime and at night... you weren't allowed to speak because the news was always on. And I remember the time around the ceasefire and that was always a big thing, when the ceasefire was on, everybody was watching. The news around all that sort of stuff, just praying that there would be peace.”

24 year old female, Northern Ireland

“I seen a couple of things in the papers, you know, where things have been going on and they might explain it a wee bit better.”

16 year old male, Northern Ireland

“Probably just watching films and stuff like that... I seen a couple of films... like ‘Some Mother’s Son’ and I seen films about the hunger strike and ‘The Wind that Shakes the Barley’ and stuff like that there... it just gives you a bit of an idea, like.”

17 year old male, Northern Ireland

Almost two thirds of the respondents in the 24-25 age group commented that their awareness of and knowledge about the conflict came in part from **personal experience**. At least four respondents in the 16-18 age group were aware of the Troubles through direct, personal experience – through witnessing violent, sectarian attacks as well as witnessing or participating in riots.

“Probably that beating that Daddy got... that would be the first time I thought: ‘No, there is something not right here.’ I can’t really remember big, big events happening where I thought: ‘Oh, this is because there is trouble here’. I don’t remember ever thinking that until that night, so that would be my earliest I think.”

25 year old female, Northern Ireland

“I’d say it [learning about the conflict] would have been all through personal experience, because in the Bogside round the eighties used to be heavy patrolled by the RUC and the British Army... a lot of bricks and bottles being thrown, riots... The army walking through and police and bricks and bottles and petrol bombs and masked men running about, you know? So I’d say it would all be personal experience.”

24 year old male, Northern Ireland

Generally speaking, **friends** appeared to be a much less important source of information about the Troubles than parents, grandparents and teachers. A small number of respondents mentioned learning about the conflict from their friends at school. One respondent, whose father had left the RUC suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, said that she spoke more to her friends than her family about the Troubles

because she didn't want to "burden" her parents any more than she had to. Only one of the eleven year olds interviewed mentioned speaking to his friends about the conflict. This was during a period when rioting in Belfast had been widely reported on the news. Several respondents highlighted the potential for friends to influence each others' views concerning the other community and the Troubles. Four respondents reported that they rarely, if ever, spoke about the Troubles with their friends.

Two respondents in the oldest age group mentioned that they gained a greater understanding of the situation in Northern Ireland while attending **university**. For one of these respondents, this was because university was the first place she mixed with Catholics. For the other respondent, this was because at university he had the opportunity to pursue his interest in and deepen his knowledge of Irish, particularly Northern Irish, history. He spoke about "gaining a greater understanding of the roots of the conflict and the dynamics behind it".

Five respondents reported that they "just knew" about the Troubles, while one eleven year old respondent said that he had learned about the Troubles through "general knowledge". Several respondents had sought out information about the conflict independently because they were interested in learning more about it.

With regard to pinpointing at what **age** they became aware of the Troubles, one respondent in the 16-18 age group believed he was "probably about the age of ten" when he became aware of the conflict. Others respondent reported being slightly older than

this when they first became aware of the Troubles. For example, one said that he was not aware of the Troubles until he came to secondary school. Another respondent spoke about how children's awareness of the Troubles develops slowly over time. One respondent commented that people his age "probably think they know more [about the Troubles] than they do" (male respondent – 16-18 age group – Catholic-maintained school).

Sources of understanding of conflict in the two regions

As in Bosnia and Herzegovina, most of the respondents in the oldest age group in Northern Ireland commented that their awareness of and knowledge about the conflict came in part from personal experience. However one notable difference between the data from Northern Ireland and the data from Bosnia and Herzegovina is that respondents in the two younger age groups in Northern Ireland also reported how their own direct personal experience of the Troubles influenced their awareness and understanding of the conflict. This could perhaps be explained by the significant differences in the nature of the conflicts concerned, with the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina being an all-out war lasting three and a half years and the Troubles being a long, low-intensity conflict lasting more than three decades. In spite of the 'outbreak' of peace in the 1990s, sporadic rioting and sectarian violence continues in Northern Ireland, particularly at interface areas in the cities of Belfast and Derry/Londonderry. It is thus unsurprising that some of the younger respondents, particularly those from interface

areas and paramilitary- controlled housing estates, have personally experienced such violence and civil disturbance – for example by witnessing violent, sectarian attacks as well as witnessing or participating in riots – and that these experiences have influenced how they understand the Troubles.

More generally, parents and, to a lesser extent, grandparents were identified as influential in shaping the children and young people's awareness and understanding of the conflicts in their regions, both in Northern Ireland and in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Sometimes discussion about the conflict was initiated by the children and young people themselves, who were curious to learn more. Other times respondents picked up bits and pieces of information from the stories their parents told them, as well as from overhearing conversations among older family and community members. The comments of the 16-18 year olds in Bosnia and Herzegovina highlight that although the war is spoken about within the family, it remains a difficult topic of conversation for the older generation (parents and grandparents) as well as for some young adults who lived through the war. Indeed one respondent commented that she did not ask her family about the war because she herself did not want to remember it.

Generational Differences

Respondents in both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Northern Ireland pointed to generational differences in attitudes towards other ethnic and religious groups. One respondent from Northern Ireland commented that “the older people are the bitter people”, while another remarked that

“the older people is the ones who still then pass it onto their kids”. Respondents seemed to understand that parents' behaviour and attitudes were the consequence of often traumatic conflict-related experiences, and that for this reason some parents were reluctant to allow their children to mix with young people from the other ethnic/religious tradition.

“I have friends that they want their social lives with us, but because Mummy and Daddy are very strict on the Catholic and Protestant thing they won't allow them to have Catholic friends or Protestant friends. So I am just thinking, why draw back your children when they want to... you know, create a better world? Why are you holding them back? Why do you want them to be still living in the past?”

18 year old female, Northern Ireland

A strong sense of pessimism emerged from the data concerning the older people's ability to change their views. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, one respondent observed that while she could understand that some older generation might continue to hold strong views, she found the nationalistic fervour of some young people much harder to fathom. A minority of those interviewed seemed to feel that some young people were even more bitter than their parents' and grandparents' generations. A respondent from Bosnia and Herzegovina warned that by telling their children stories about the war, parents might be unintentionally fostering such views, creating “even more hatred among the younger ones listening to it... those who did not even experience it”. In Northern Ireland, some respondents argued that sectarian prejudice was being passed down from generation to

generation. One respondent in the 16-18 age group, whose friends were actively involved in the youth wing of a loyalist paramilitary organisation, believed that it was almost inevitable that young people perpetuated the conflict because they were “brought up to love the paramilitaries”. Another respondent suggested that young people’s bitterness and sectarianism might be because they had not experienced the reality of violent conflict.

“It is the young ones that is more bitter about it... Because they haven’t been through the Troubles and the older people has been through the Troubles and they know, like, not to go back to them times... and some [young] people just don’t understand that you can’t go back there.”
 16 year old female, Northern Ireland

In direct contrast to this, other respondents in Northern Ireland commented on young people’s relative ignorance regarding the Troubles. One respondent believed this to be a positive development:

“They have not heard of it [the Troubles]... they are not aware of it... and in some ways I think that that is absolutely fantastic, you know? They have moved on, you know? They don’t care so much, you know? I am not deluded in the fact of knowing that yes, there still is going to be sectarianism, you know... of course there is. But it is basically that they are starting to move towards reconciliation, but I do think it will be a long process.”
 24 year old female, Northern Ireland

A majority of respondents were optimistic about young people’s ability to reject the violence and

division of the past and to create a better future, in spite of their obvious frustration concerning adults’ prejudices. A consensus emerged that it would be hard, if not impossible, to change the older generation’s attitudes and that efforts to encourage acceptance and mutual understanding therefore should focus on the younger generation.

“There is a lot of hatred present... especially among older people and people who lost someone. But I cannot expect someone who was fifty or forty-five during the war not to feel that hatred anymore... that it all vanishes overnight... But I think that in young people it slowly disappears...”
 25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“I do not believe that you can reconcile grown-ups, but children... I think that people cannot be reconciled... reconciliation for people who participated in this war is impossible, definitely... but new generations, yes.”
 24 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“You can’t change the adults, you can’t. But if you start with the young generation, try and mix them together... that could actually create a better society because they are starting to mix and mingle together. They are starting to learn different things about each other. That is the only way to do it, because you can’t turn around and force an older Catholic and... people will not follow it.”
 18 year old female, Northern Ireland

“For at least children to mix... If adults will not, then so be it. But at least for us children to get to know each other.”
 Eleven year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

SUMMARY

In both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Northern Ireland, children and young people's main sources of information about the war/Troubles were:

- Adults (parents, grandparents, teachers)
- Personal experience (depending on age)
- Media
- School (subjects such as History, Religion, Politics, Personal Development)

Very few respondents reported discussing the conflict with their friends. It is clear from respondents' responses that for many people in Bosnia and Herzegovina the war remains a difficult, often painful topic of conversation.

In Northern Ireland, respondents also suggested that the physical surroundings in which children and young people grow up have an impact on their awareness, knowledge and understanding of the Troubles. In Northern Ireland, the majority of respondents in the 24-25 age group believed that the Troubles were not adequately addressed when they were at school.

What do young people say about reconciliation?

What is reconciliation?

As has been found with adults in the Northern Ireland context (Hamber & Kelly, 2005; 2008) it was difficult for some young people to say what they thought reconciliation was and to define it. However, most had a view on reconciliation. Four of the respondents in Northern Ireland said they did not know what it was at all, but interestingly all of those interviewed in the Bosnia and Herzegovina context had a view on it.²² The younger respondents had a fairly basic understanding of the concept, i.e., that reconciliation was focused on the need to ‘make things better’ or ‘fix things’ if people were fighting.²³ This broadly echoed the views of the older young people who saw reconciliation primarily as about addressing divisions, the need for harmony, coming together, listening, talking about problems, communicating and addressing them, and simply the need to stop fighting.

“Well, when one speak about the reconciliation I think that it means for people to at least try to accept the views of others and if they are against that view, to present their facts and maybe that other side would then accept their view or they would meet somewhere in the

middle. So that is the reconciliation.... when a solution is found for a certain situation.”

16 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Reconciliation [thinks], I suppose it is just really accepting the other person, do you know, if they are, you know someone from the opposite side from you and they are not being sides.”

24 year old female, Northern Ireland

“Reconciliation for me means that all of us should be one community. Not to fight over certain things. To have Muslims, Serbs and Croats form one community.”

17 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Reconciliation...well...to bring relations between two sides in harmony. To have nice relations, not to have disputes happening. Not to have, let me say, nonsense any more [laughter]. I do not know... To have everything functioning in a just way.”

16 year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“It depends on what context I suppose, but reconciliation is sort of making two and two equal four... it can be, in a relationship sense it could be reconciliation between two partners, but I suppose you can see as reconciliation in terms of two torn parts of a community sort of trying to weave together again, because I know there was a huge divide, I think it is getting better and I think it has pretty much got better.

²² The word for reconciliation in Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian is *pomirenje*. The direct translation into English is ‘reconciliation’, however many people in Bosnia and Herzegovina understand it to mean ‘peace between people’, ‘making up’, etc. The word is used quite often in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which may explain why more young people interviewed there were familiar with the term and had a view on it.

²³ It is important to note that the younger group were not asked directly what they thought reconciliation was but rather what should one do when two groups or individuals are fighting. This was done following piloting of the questions where the word seemed elusive to the youngest age group.

To the extent of you know, you just, they are nearly there, there is always some sort of speculation you can make about it.”

17 year old male, Northern Ireland

For the older groups, especially for the 24-25 year old group in Northern Ireland, however, a range of more sophisticated tensions were evident in their responses; that is a number spoke of the tension between ‘moving on’ and dealing with the past, and addressed issues such as memorialisation and the challenges of thinking about justice after conflict. These were less of an issue in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where reconciliation and dealing with the past seemed to focus a bit more on whether different groups should talk about the past or not. This probably points to the fact that currently in Northern Ireland there is a lot of public debate about how to deal with the past, and clearly the older groups interviewed have strong opinions on this in the Northern Ireland context.

In other words, the youth (especially 24-25 year olds) are aware of the issue and very much part of the debate. There is, however, a sharp distinction between them and the younger groups in this regard. Eleven year olds in Northern Ireland did not mention the concept at all and had a limited focus on the legacy of the conflict (a few mentioned Catholic and Protestant divisions). This suggests that possibly while at school in Northern Ireland young people (at least the ones interviewed for the project) are fairly sheltered from mainstream politics. The differences might also be simply down to age. The 24-25 year olds would have been teenagers during the ceasefire and Agreement years (1994-1998), whereas the youngest groups would still

have been at a less impressionable age. The 16 year olds would have from eight to ten years onwards grown up in a relatively peaceful society, with the youngest group having been born close to 1998 when the Agreement was forged in Northern Ireland.

There were also marked differences between Northern Ireland and Bosnia and Herzegovina on this issue, especially in the youngest age group. As mentioned, the Northern Ireland young people showed little if any knowledge of the conflict, and tended to focus on a range of subjects from football to issues at their school, seldom mentioning divisions in the society. By comparison, the young people (eleven year olds) from Bosnia and Herzegovina spoke fairly eloquently and at length about the ethnic problems and political problems in their country. They seemed to also be much more aware of the atrocities committed in their country.

“I don’t know much about the war but I know as much as I have seen on TV for example about how they are burying people in mass graves. I don’t think they should be left in these mass graves but each person should be buried with dignity. I have thought a lot about all of this and I have realised that people suffered a lot and there was a lot of pain.”

Eleven year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“We should not divide people by their nationality. We should all be together. We should divide people rather by their character, we should spend time together. Also in our parliament and politics everything is divided by nationality so we have Bosniak, Croat and Serb representatives. I think they should all be united

because then maybe the situation would also get better in our country.”

Eleven year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

This might reflect the fact that war in former Yugoslavia was so all-encompassing and its remnants, such as destroyed buildings, are still evident today. That said, the young people from Bosnia and Herzegovina (especially the older group as mentioned) did not talk as much as those in Northern Ireland about the tensions inherent in the reconciliation process (e.g. the challenges of memorialisation, or amnesties). Rather those from Bosnia and Herzegovina focussed on the problems of ongoing ethnic division. This reflects the dominant political concern in the region, i.e., segregation between different ethnic groups and the management of multiple ethnically-defined territories and governments (see ‘Dealing with the Past’ below for more detail on this).

Common vision

The issue of a need for a common vision as part of the definition of reconciliation used in the project did not receive too much focus by any of the groups. In Northern Ireland only four references in the 24-23 year old group were coded as being about the need to develop a common vision and none in the other age categories. This contrasted quite sharply with the view that there was a need to ‘move on’ from the past and forget it (15 references in total). This is not to say in Northern Ireland there was a forgive and forget attitude, rather many felt it was important to ‘move on’ because there seemed to be little progress when people focussed on historical grievances. As one respondent noted:

“People need to move on, that is the only way that I can say it in my own way that people need to move on and let go of what happened in the past and look towards a new future, if you keep holding your memories in the past and bringing them into your future, you are never going to let go and you are never going to get peace to where you want it to be. That is the way I see it and that is the way I have dealt with it, just move on, just let it go, never let it bother you, well obviously it is going to bother you, but just don’t let it interfere with your new friends, you new relationships you are going to bring it into because it will cause problems.”

18 year old male, Northern Ireland

“Well I think that, to be honest, I think there’s a part of it where we have to move on, as well, you know I think that there’s a large number of people here who are still living in the past and not acknowledging that Northern Ireland is changing and looking on.”

25 year old female, Northern Ireland

In Bosnia and Herzegovina only five respondents mentioned the need to ‘move on’ and it was expressed as:

“Well, first of all, I think what needs to happen is that we wouldn’t live in this hatred towards each other so to say. You know, we against Serbs or Croats or they against us. We should reconcile with them. To leave what happened in the past as part of the past and to move towards the future.”

Eleven year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Thus we can see the desire to move on from the past, especially in Northern Ireland, was fairly

strong. Again this might reflect the fact that many of those interviewed now had very little direct experience of the political conflict in Northern Ireland. The desire to ‘move on’ was less pronounced in Bosnia and Herzegovina perhaps because the impact of the conflict remains to a far greater degree.

That said, the idea of the need for a common vision was expressed by a minority of respondents, five in Bosnia and Herzegovina and four in Northern Ireland. Where the notion of a common vision was expressed it was typically noted:

“You’re going to have to have an objective, something that both sides are working towards, because you’re not going to get nothing out of it if one’s still working towards always still wanting to keep Ireland as part of the British Isles and one wanting, all we want a united Ireland. Because they’re just going to still clash and still make conflict the whole way. You’re going to have to have a common goal they’re going to have to work toward.”

25 year old male, Northern Ireland

“Well, a unified answer should be found by the politicians. When there is a question, they should find one unified answer.”

Eleven year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“To have other people, not just politicians, share their views and ideas about our country.”

Eleven year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

On the whole, however, the subject was not spontaneously covered in detail by respondents with discussions focussing more on the notion of

‘moving on’ than the need to find some sort of common vision. There was mention of the need to mend relationships if broken; however, for most this was not expressed directly as the need to build some sort of common view of the future. The way the notion of ‘moving on’ was cast, it had elements of ‘common vision’ within in it, insofar as the notion of a common vision was about reaching consensus on the need to stop the past from polluting the present and future. This was particularly expressed in Bosnia and Herzegovina:

“Well, I do not think that we should forget but it should not be transferred to the next generations and create hatred.”

25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Well, I think, as far as the war is concerned, it is normal that we should not forget about it, but also there is no need to go into some big details so that the child knows directly what happened etc., like what we saw on TV.”

24 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Acknowledging and dealing with the past

The issue of dealing with the past exercised the older group interviewed in Northern Ireland a great deal. They spoke about questions such as how do you get the truth about the past out, how to manage issues such as justice, as well as questions concerning memorialisation in a society where different groups commemorate different issues and events. On the whole they held sophisticated and well-developed views on dealing with the past and the tensions implicit in it.

"I think that the justice that people would be happy with... because there's a lot of people moving on, there's a lot of people meeting... maybe the killers of their loved ones... And I think that justice is [inaudible] an apology. That they were wrong, that it shouldn't have happened. And I think that's what people are more or less looking for in Northern Ireland... is an apology, and for maybe loved ones who had disappeared and who have not been found and given, maybe, a location or the bodies are brought back so they can give a proper burial, that... and that trouble, that conflict can be laid to rest. That's what I see it."

25 year old male, Northern Ireland

"I have never really been a believer in shrines or in monuments I don't think that they are ultimately beneficial, I mean they look aesthetically pleasing and so on, but I find they actually attract pigeons and in fifty years time, young people might find that it is a good place to have a carry-out and drink....And I mean I think that you would be much better off, eh, if you were remembering trying to do a project that is a living project, it was very much something that was continuing, doing something good about it for each community worker through youth organisations or something that can continue thereafter and not just be a shrine of some description."

24 year old male, Northern Ireland

In the Northern Ireland context a range of issues were covered by respondents in relation to dealing with the past. There were ten references to the need for acknowledgment and admission of wrong doing; ten references were made to the importance of remembrance and not forgetting

what happened; six respondents felt apologies were necessary; five mentioned forgiveness although there was general scepticism about the term and a view that it could not be forced; a further five spoke of justice generally from the perspective of the conditions needed for justice to be done (e.g. apology was needed), although two of this group spoke directly of the need for retributive justice - i.e., that the 'bad men' should go back to jail - and another respondent was very clear that 'bombers' should not be remembered, only victims. On the whole there was no overwhelming mention of a truth commission. One respondent said they were against the idea and five felt truth, broadly speaking, was necessary to deal with the past.

The youngest group in Northern Ireland did not mention these issues at all, and there were only four mentions in the 16-18 year olds group. This suggests some sheltering of young people from key political issues while at school, or because the age of respondents meant key political events had not impacted on, or been prevalent, in their lives.

By comparison, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially among the older groups interviewed, the issue of dealing with the past was in fact coded more prominently (20 respondents across the age groups were coded on the dealing with the past category). There was a fairly strong emphasis on the need to talk as a precursor to building relationships.

"My opinion is that it should be talked about. Not to suffocate people with that, to make them remember certain events but to mention it in some ways so people simply do not forget about

it in order not to have it repeated. I think that some people whose view is that there was no aggression on Bosnia and Herzegovina should start thinking more and to understand what has happened, who is guilty and so on. Only when that happens we can improve some things, but before that hardly.”

25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“No, never. Because everything you hold back will explode one day, I mean everything you put aside. I think that everything can be sorted out through conversation.”

25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Well, that is very difficult but I think through some facts and events that all people know about and have seen it, the correct interpretation can be extracted from, and it can be seen what exactly happen and to come to the joint conclusion. Not to have conflicted opinions any more. Based on all those evidences it can be seen what exactly happened.”

17 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

In the Bosnia and Herzegovina context a range of issues were covered by respondents in relation to dealing with the past. There were three references to the need for acknowledgment and admission of wrong doing (or at least the need to talk about what happened); one respondent felt apologies were necessary, six references were made to the importance of remembrance and not forgetting what happened; no respondents mentioned forgiveness; and only one respondent spoke of justice in this context from a retributive sense (“I am for justice, the guilty ones should

be brought to justice” - 25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina). On the whole there was no overwhelming mention of a truth commission.

Thus, comparatively speaking, a curious pattern emerged. On the whole, those from Bosnia and Herzegovina were coded more frequently as speaking about dealing with the past (20 in total compared to 14 in Northern Ireland). However, Northern Ireland featured much more prominently on specific issues such as apologies, forgiveness, acknowledgment, remembrance, justice and the like. This was the result, at least in an initial analysis, of two issues. In Bosnia and Herzegovina dealing with the past was discussed in less depth and usually related to whether or not the past should be spoken about - with a fair number of respondents endorsing this idea. In Northern Ireland, although fewer respondents were coded on the category of dealing with the past, where they were they tended to speak about a wide range of subjects and topics in the area resulting in multiple coding on different issues for each interview. In other words, the whole debate about dealing with the past, certainly in the older age group, seemed to be more animated. Respondents in Northern Ireland were exercised by the dealing with the past debate in multiple ways. In Bosnia and Herzegovina the issue was present but not as vociferously discussed, suggesting the debate on dealing with the past, or specifically a direct public policy focus on transitional justice mechanisms, is less developed than in Northern Ireland.²⁴ This suggests that, perhaps because of the war’s extent, the notion of dealing with the

²⁴ The transitional justice debate in Northern Ireland has gained momentum with various NGO and government initiatives to explore how best to deal with the past. See for example, Consultative Group on the Past (2008; 2009) and McEvoy (2006). Also see www.healingthroughremembering.org.

past is still in its infancy and equated with issues such as simply mentioning or talking about the war between groups. It would seem that in Bosnia and Herzegovina many basic issues, such as ethnic divisions and war as a whole, still need to be spoken about between groups before more challenging issues such as apology, forgiveness and the like will enter the public lexicon.

However, the issue of dealing with the past was discussed in both areas and was the second most prominent area covered next to the issue of building relationships (below). Views were expressed on this especially in the older age groups. This clearly suggests, along with the depth and wisdom evident in the opinions expressed, that young people (especially those over 18) should be included in debates about seemingly contentious issues such as dealing with the past.

Building relationships

The issue of the need to build relationships between groups as part of any process of reconciliation received the most attention among all groups (some 60 mentions in total). This typically included a focus on the need to address divisions, integrate communities where possible, the need for harmony, to talk about problems, as well as communicate and address problems highlighting what was common across the groups.

“I think reconciliation, it can’t just come from one side. You’re going to have to bring the two sides together, and sit down, and you’re going to have to listen to each other’s stories, and listen that... they’re not different from us. They’re the

exact same, they’re facing the exact same problems. It should be... sit down, and chat about it.”

24 year old male, Northern Ireland

“In Bosnia and Herzegovina everybody is not thinking the same. Each one have different opinion, different views and can not agree about one issue. They could agree if they sat together and consider the issue. They could. And we would have bright future if the entities and nations came to agreement.”

16 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“I think we should like hang about with people that aren’t in your religious group and stuff and like go to an integrated school, just to, to meet new people. Because, I just don’t think it is right when there are Catholic and Protestant schools because you just keep dividing if you carry on. And it is not integrated.”

17 year old male, Northern Ireland

“Conversation is needed. That both groups share their views and see which is better and which is worse. If they cannot agree, war would happen again. What is needed is conversation.”

Eleven year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

This raises two issues. Firstly, the issue of relationships is, whether considered in depth, or responded to spontaneously, seen to be at the heart of the reconciliation process. This is consistent with theoretical work in this area (Bloomfield, Barnes and Huyse, 2003 Hamber & Kelly, 2005). Secondly, it suggests that most young people have a fairly developed sense of the core values implicit in building healthy relationships and they are aware of what is

needed to mend broken relationships. The only group that did not make much mention of the issue of building relationships as part of reconciliation was the 24-25 year olds in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Young people's responses, and their clear articulation of what needs to be done to build relationships, suggest that almost all of the young people we interviewed actually had a fairly deep sense of the values in peacemaking and peacebuilding. This raises questions about the focus of many reconciliation and peace education programmes with young people that focus on developing values around peace. It would seem from our sample that what is more pertinent is how you put values into 'practice' and deal with the practical challenges of building relationships.

Attitudinal change

The question of the need for attitudinal change did not feature as highly as one might expect (12 coded responses in total), although a fair number mentioned the need for views to change if reconciliation was to be built.

"Reconciliation I think begins with an overhaul of attitudes and opinions and perhaps a very rigorous analytical questioning of beliefs and the foundations of those beliefs, it sounds very easy for me to say that, but it is, you know, it is more than a, it is more than a handshake and a photocall of the Stormont."

25 year old male, Northern Ireland

"It would be the best if all people were thinking morally. If morality exists, then reconciliation

could happen. If one thinks right, then he/she will never make mistakes. And reconciliation can always happen in those situations. But if somebody is crazy fool [laughter] and wants things to be done his/her own way, then fight would always occur and it is unlikely to have reconciliation. It would be the best if we worked on it among ourselves."

18 year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Young people were of the view that *everyone* had to change views or play a part in reconciliation if it was to be achieved, including themselves.

"I think that reconciliation should be worked on at all levels because I think that such an important decision for this region, this are, should be brought by everybody, not only executive bodies or someone else. So, everybody should be involved and agree if they want to do it, or if not to give up and not to talk about it anymore."

17 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"Just everybody. Take part in it and work together as a team...Aye, everybody like. Young and old."

17 year old male, Northern Ireland

"Personally I think everyone, everyone who are citizens of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Britain whatever they want to call themselves have a responsibility in just, in their general everyday lives with how even, just the comments that they make, the things that they say, you know and I am not blameless, you know, I have laughed at jokes that are not appropriate and it is human nature, you know."

24 year old female, Northern Ireland

Comparing these responses with results with similar research carried out with adults (Hamber & Kelly, 2005; 2008), it is interesting to note that adults tended to see the need for attitudinal change as the responsibility of other groups and not themselves. In short, they tended to see reconciliation as someone else's problem. Young people saw it as everyone's concern, including themselves.

In the interviews, one of the areas that did receive a fair amount of attention, however, was the need for attitudinal change especially among politicians. It is fair to say politicians received substantial criticism from the young people interviewed for their perceived continued role in dividing society. The young people interviewed gave a clear message: politicians have a prime responsibility in building relationships between groups and that their views and actions perpetuate the conflict. This ranged across age groups and case study areas:

“We shouldn't give up. There is future for us and as long as politicians also give more effort, even better.”

Eleven year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Just to put everything behind us and for Ian Paisley and all of them ones, mad dogs to shake hands and forget about it, stop arguing, waste of valuable TV time [smiles], they are always stuck in the TV.”

17 year old female, Northern Ireland

“First politicians... through media, pre-election campaigns... promises... empty promises. They should start first. I mean common people are even now... have good relations in the

neighbourhood but it all start from the politicians. If they would start with it, everything would be different.”

16 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“The politicians need to just let up on some things. And let the other side too, you know, you might have to, you might have to give up a few things yourself, do you know...I would say the government, politicians, it is the politicians are seen to be you know, inclusive of each other, reaching out towards each other, then I think the people would follow.”

25 year old female, Northern Ireland

Or as one respondent, rather put it:

“They [politicians] need to wise up! Stop acting like kids!”

16 year old female, Northern Ireland

Socio-economic and political change

There is little doubt that in Bosnia and Herzegovina the political structures were seen as a major stumbling block to building reconciliation; this theme came up time and time again in both the older group and the youngest groups.

“The reconciliation in this country, I mean, it will never happen because of Republic of Srpska, so basically two countries inside one border, plus three different nations and have same rights, first of all Republic of Srpska would not allow us...to have country...they have their country and they would not allow anyone to...”

24 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“We are all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina but they are a bit different there. They see that Republic of Srpska is their country and we see the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina as ours. I would like to see that we all come together and unite and that there would no longer be this division. And that we write with the same letters, speak the same language and not make divisions.”

Eleven year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

In Northern Ireland the need for political change was also linked to reconciliation, however, it was much more targeted at politicians leading by example and getting the current institutions working. In other words, in Bosnia and Herzegovina young people seemed to be acutely aware of structural obstacles (different political entities) as being a major threat to any reconciliation processes, whereas in Northern Ireland it appeared among young people there was less concern with the structures and more with getting them to work and politicians to participate in them fully.

When it came to socio-economic impediments to reconciliation this was primarily a concern in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although those interviewed in Bosnia and Herzegovina did not link socio-economic change directly to reconciliation there is little doubt the questions about economic security were at the forefront of their minds. Of the 15 respondents interviewed in the 24-25 year old category in Bosnia and Herzegovina, eleven mentioned concerns with future employment and economic stability.

Two of the 16 year olds also raised these issues.

“Well, it is all the same for the whole Bosnia and Herzegovina. Here, also, let’s say, the unemployment is big problem. But, I think that the bigger problem is... that the younger people are more frustrated by high level of unemployment. Because, today... it is real problem to find a job.”

25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“I do not know. Once school is completed, one goes to the university. And here there is no job.”
16 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

By contrast none of the Northern Ireland respondents in any category mentioned concerns with the economy or their future security (recognising that the research was carried out prior to the 2008 global economic collapse). This suggests that socio-economic change, particularly economic security, is a major concern for Bosnia and Herzegovina young people; perhaps this is a reflection of the fact that unemployment there is 58.4% (youth unemployment rate)²⁵ compared to 4.6% in Northern Ireland.²⁶ In line with what was mentioned above, the need for political change however featured heavily in both groups, especially the need for politicians to be more constructive in solving and dealing with social division. The young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina were clearly more attuned to ethnic divisions and the political structures that reinforce them, i.e., multiple territories and governance structures.

²⁵ The youth unemployment rate (58.4%) is double that of the overall rate in Bosnia and Herzegovina (29%). See UNDP figures at <http://www.undp.ba/index.aspx?PID=25&RID=26>

²⁶ See Northern Ireland Executive figures, <http://tinyurl.com/niemployment>

SUMMARY

Young people have strong views about the concept of reconciliation. The issues that they seem most animated about with regard to the concept are building relationships and dealing with the past.

24-25 year olds in Northern Ireland seem to have very developed ideas about dealing with the past in their society and the problems inherent in it (e.g. justice, victimhood, memorialisation). Their views would be important in any debate about dealing with the past. Dealing with the past is an important issue to Bosnia and Herzegovina young people, but given the impact of the war and political instability, they feel 'talking about the past' is the first step to reconciliation.

Eleven year olds in Northern Ireland seem to have a very limited knowledge of political issues in the society. In contrast, this group has fairly sophisticated views in Bosnia and Herzegovina, recognising at their young age,

for example, the way the political structures limit possibilities for reconciliation and that the war still has a legacy.

Young people seem to understand the values implicit in reconciliation processes. This raises questions about education aimed at reconciliation, i.e., arguably it should focus on practical ways of building relationships and dealing with difficult situations rather than the transmission of values.

Economic insecurity, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina, is seen by young people as a major impediment to building a lasting peace and reconciliation.

Young people feel they have a responsibility to build reconciliation and want a voice in debates about it, but equally, feel very strongly that politicians should lead such processes and currently, in both societies, they feel politicians perpetuate division rather than help overcome it.

The role of education in reconciliation

Bosnia and Herzegovina

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, some respondents, especially those in the oldest age group, saw a role for education not in dealing directly with issues relating to the war but rather in creating an educated workforce and therefore a better economic future for the country. According to these respondents, education's role in the reconciliation process was less important, at least at this stage, than its role in contributing to the nation's economic prosperity. This may be explained by the relatively high levels of unemployment – particularly youth unemployment – and continuing economic legacies of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.²⁷

“Teachers do not need to teach my child about the war. It is not necessary since every conscious parent will teach their child about the war so that something would not happen again. But to teach them about a better life, to teach them to speak better, to speak foreign languages better, not only teach mathematics.”

25 year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Actually, I think one thing would be for the school teachers to make sure that they educate the children to be as smart as possible so that this country would later have plenty of good people.”

Eleven year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Respondents also saw education as having an important role to play in the possible eventual accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the European Union (EU). One possible explanation for this may be the commonly held perception that full membership of the EU might bring about a significant improvement in the country's economic situation. This view was evidenced by one 17 year old respondent, who remarked that joining the EU was “everybody's wish”, while a 25 year old respondent similarly observed that “everyone is longing for us to join the European Union”. Respondents identified education's potential both to contribute to and benefit from EU membership. An eleven year old respondent, for example, believed that EU membership might benefit the education system, bringing about “better possibilities, better education”.

“If this war hadn't happened, Bosnia and Herzegovina would now be a much better country. More advanced. Maybe even a member of the EU... I think of how wonderful it would be if we became part of the EU. Everything would be different. For example, our money wouldn't be called KM anymore.²⁸ We would have the Euro. There would be more development and advancement... If we were to join the EU, schools would be more developed, there would be better possibilities, better education, new school subjects... many things.”

Eleven year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

While the 24-25 year olds interviewed in Bosnia and Herzegovina highlighted what they perceived to be the education system's

²⁷ See footnote 25, above.

²⁸ KM stands for *konvertibilna marka*, ‘convertible mark’ in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian. The convertible mark is the currency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

obligation to enhance young people's employment prospects, many of the younger respondents, particularly in the 16-18 age group, emphasised the role of education in contributing to a better understanding among young people of issues related to the war and to post-war, societal reconciliation. The feeling emerged strongly that such issues needed to be addressed directly in schools.

***"Children should know about the war."
16 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina***

"I think we should learn about the most recent one [war] that we were involved in. It is ok to learn and talk about everything else, but this one that we experienced, we should learn more about it... It did not happen a thousand years ago... After all, we experienced it, only we were too young and do not remember."

17 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"School should teach us and pay importance to the fact that we need to reconcile with each other... that we are not alone in this country but that there are other nationalities and groups here as well."

Eleven year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Northern Ireland

Most respondents in Northern Ireland believed that education had a key role to play in the reconciliation process.

***"Education is one of the key things."
18 year old female, Northern Ireland***

"Definitely, yeah, I mean kids spend the majority of their time in school."

25 year old female, Northern Ireland

"Inevitably you are going to be taught stuff about who you are and who the other lot are, and so that has to be actively involved in reconciliation if it needs to work."

24 year old female, Northern Ireland

Six of the respondents in the oldest age group, 24-25 year olds, were themselves parents. They observed that being a parent made issues relating to education and its role in reconciliation more relevant to them, in terms of the type of school they might choose to send their child to and the kind of values that would underpin their child's education.

"Planning to have a family, and having a son as well, it just became an awful lot more relevant to me..."

25 year old female, Northern Ireland

Why? What is the rationale?

Respondents in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Northern Ireland gave very similar reasons to justify the need to learn about the past and address issues related to reconciliation in the classroom. For many respondents, the very fact that the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Troubles in Northern Ireland were part of the regions' respective histories was justification enough to begin to address these issues at school. According to them, it was part of their country's history and so children and young people should learn about what happened.

"Of course children should learn, because that is our history."

17 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“They don’t say in vain that ‘what is not written is forgotten’... I think that everybody should know what has happened, the same as we learn about the First and Second World Wars...”
 25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Because it’s a big part of history. A big part of history. And about where they come from. And I would’ve like to learn about it when I was at school... we just didn’t have the choice.”
 24 year old male, Northern Ireland

Respondents in both regions were of the opinion that it was important to learn about the past so that history would not repeat itself. One respondent in Northern Ireland argued that young people should have to learn about the Troubles “because you can’t just forget all those people who died.” Several respondents in the oldest age group in Bosnia and Herzegovina remarked that it was important for children and young people to learn about events like the massacre at Srebrenica to discover for themselves the awful things that human beings are capable of during war.²⁹ Other respondents felt that it was important to teach children and young people about the war in order to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to be able to cope should war happen again.

“If this conflict’s been going on for arguably eight hundred years, and as a cycle of different battles and events, there’s no reason why in a hundred years it couldn’t all happen again. So I think education in the generations following – post-conflict society, or so-called post-conflict society – are crucial in making sure that it

doesn’t happen again.”
 25 year old male, Northern Ireland

“I think we should learn more [about the war]. It is something nobody can avoid once it happened... we never know what the future brings. It can happen to us, and we need to know how to deal with it.”
 16 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“To demonstrate what some people are capable of doing... I mean, those who are you superiors are capable of making you a killer and later aren’t accountable for their actions.”
 18 year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

There was broad agreement among respondents in both regions that learning about the past could help young people to understand the present. Some respondents in Northern Ireland also believed that learning about the past might help young people to understand who they are, in terms of their cultural identity.

“So that everyone will realise why it is going on and that it is ridiculous, so then they will not grow up with the mentality of ‘I am Catholic or Protestant, I am going to fight whoever’.”
 17 year old male, Northern Ireland

“Stormont and all, now that they are all... all the people, like, the politicians are joining and all... it wouldn’t have been like that 20 years ago, it wouldn’t have been like that, they wouldn’t have sat beside each other. And now they are having talks and all that, and people need to know why.”
 16 year old female, Northern Ireland

²⁹ In July 1995, approximately 8,000 Bosniak men and boys in Srebrenica were killed by units of the Army of Repulika Sprska.

“It is such a controversial thing and, you know, with living in Northern Ireland they need to know the background to why it is Northern Ireland and not just an all Ireland...”
 25 year old female, Northern Ireland

“Well, they need to understand the structures that they’re living in now, and how they can engage in those structures - as a child, never mind as an adult.”
 25 year old male, Northern Ireland

Several respondents, particularly in Northern Ireland, observed that children and young people would learn about the conflict regardless of whether or not it was ‘taught’ in schools. One respondent argued that it was therefore important that all staff at schools – not only teachers but also support staff – consider carefully the kinds of messages they were transmitting, explicitly and otherwise, to pupils.

“I think it is an inevitable part of what people will learn about, whether or not you try and teach them about it. And so definitely thought should be given to the kind of messages that you are giving people.”
 24 year old female, Northern Ireland

Respondents expressed a desire to have a clear understanding of what had happened in order to be able facilitate **intergenerational learning**. For example, a 17 year old respondent from Bosnia and Herzegovina wanted to know more about the war in order to be able to pass on this information to future generations.

“I would like to expand my knowledge so one day if someone asks me, maybe my child, I am able to explain what it was about.”
 17 year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

By contrast, a 17 year old respondent from Northern Ireland, who was conscious that he had learned the history of the Troubles from the perspective of his parents and extended family, expressed a desire to be exposed to other sides of the story at school.³⁰ According to this respondent, exposure to multiple perspectives might empower young people to “make up their own minds about it”. Such learning could facilitate intergenerational dialogue on the subject of the conflict, so that not only children but also parents and grandparents could see the Troubles “from a different perspective”.

“I think it should be compulsory because that way people will be able to make up their own minds about it and be able to explain it to like family members and stuff. So if you family teaches you one thing and then you come to school and like learn about like the actual facts about it, then you can sort of go and be like ‘well, actually...’ and tell them like what you learned and stuff and then maybe they can sort of see it from a different perspective.”
 17 year old female, Northern Ireland

³⁰See footnote 21, above.

Challenges

While there was broad support for the idea of addressing the past and reconciliation-related issues in the classroom, there were caveats in relation to this. Respondents were concerned about the potential for teachers' own bias to come through in the teaching of potentially sensitive issues relating to the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Troubles in Northern Ireland. Many respondents remarked that it was impossible to teach controversial issues concerning the past objectively, especially if a teacher had him/herself been bereaved or otherwise affected by or involved in the conflict. One respondent in Bosnia and Herzegovina expressed concern that children in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska already were being taught conflicting versions of history due to substantial differences in the curricula and textbooks in the two entities.

"It is a difficult thing to do or impossible thing to do objectively."

25 year old male, Northern Ireland

"I had a chance to see the school curriculum in Republika Srpska, which is totally different and totally opposite to the Federation's curriculum... Children should learn about certain events since they make our history, but the same events are being interpreted in different ways. One side says one thing, the other the opposite."

17 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Concerns were raised that dealing with the past and issues associated with the war/Troubles in the classroom might be potentially distressing for children. Others felt it might be too difficult or controversial.

One respondent from Bosnia and Herzegovina commented that it was important not to force young people to engage with these issues if they did not feel ready. Several respondents from Northern Ireland expressed similar opinions. One respondent from Bosnia and Herzegovina observed that some children and young people might feel uncomfortable discussing issues relating to the war for fear of offending fellow pupils. Related to this, another respondent from Bosnia and Herzegovina expressed concern that discussion of sensitive issues in the classroom might lead to conflict between pupils with different perspectives. Respondents in both regions felt that, when addressing these issues in the classroom, thought needed to be given in particular to victims/survivors and their experiences.

"Those are some very sensitive issues... Especially after all we have been through, somehow you are always afraid that something you say or something you do, when you are with someone who is a different nationality... you are afraid to... that something is not understood the wrong way."

25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"I think it should be optional, because as I say some people don't want to learn about it, are happy enough just to move on, forget about it... and some people do want to learn about it, and I think it should be left optional. If they want to learn about it then they can."

25 year old male, Northern Ireland

"I don't believe that it would be worthwhile giving kids an opt-out clause where they can say 'well, my mother says that the past should be

forgot about and we should all forget about it... I want you to teach me about... chemistry or something instead'... I don't know how it would work, but I think that to a certain extent it can develop everybody."

25 year old male, Northern Ireland

"As far as the war is concerned, it is normal that we should not forget about it. But also there is no need to go into some big details so that the child knows exactly what happened... like what we saw on TV [during the war]. We watched what was happening on TV. They were killing people and we saw what it all looks like."

24 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"I don't know whether... what way it should be taught about the history of Northern Ireland... It is such a huge, controversial area... It is a very sensitive subject, and it would be very difficult to introduce into schools because it could bring up an awful lot of stuff with children whose grandparents were murdered or, you know, in... I don't know..."

24 year old female, Northern Ireland

Several respondents made comments related to the timing of educational interventions about the war/Troubles. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example, one respondent observed that it was difficult to deal with these issues in school because the war was so recent. Similarly, a respondent from Northern Ireland was concerned that it was too soon to start addressing the legacies of the Troubles in the classroom.

"Regardless of the fact that it is almost 15 years since the war, some wounds are still fresh..."

25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"I don't know, I just think it is still very early days to start, I really do... I can't even comprehend people going into school at the minute and talking about the Troubles. I can't, because it doesn't seem that long ago, I mean the UDA are still, you know, still have arms and so do the INLA, so I don't really see it as completely being dead in the water, you know... so I don't know what way you could do it in schools, but it is very, very sensitive and I think it is still really early days... I don't think it should be looked at, at the minute. There is no way..."

25 year old female, Northern Ireland

Other concerns raised by respondents included that there might not be room in the curriculum, or adequate resources, to address these issues. Several respondents observed that it was difficult to address the legacies of the past through education alone, because so much of children's knowledge and awareness of the past comes not from school but from parents and family. One respondent from Northern Ireland raised the point that parents might not want their children to learn about the past.

"I think that our curriculum is already overburdened."

16 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"It is pretty hard [to do anything] through education, because everything starts from home... first from home, and then from professors."

25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"But, you know, there is only so much that education can do as well, you know. It is... a lot of it is at home."

25 year old male, Northern Ireland

However, while acknowledging the difficulties inherent in addressing complex and sensitive conflict and reconciliation-related issues with children and young people, one eleven year old participant from Bosnia and Herzegovina nevertheless believed that they “should know what happened”.

“Somehow I feel that if we talked more about it, it might be too difficult for us. It might frighten us too much. And then again, if we don’t talk about it, then we will not know anything. We should know what happened.”
Eleven year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Where in the curriculum?³¹

Respondents believed that the legacies of the past were being addressed, to a limited extent, through the following subject areas:

- Geography;
- History;
- Language (e.g. Croatian/ Serbian/Bosnian, English/Irish language classes);
- Personal Development;
- Politics;
- Religion.

Respondents felt dealing with the past was suited to certain subject areas more than others.

“I do not think that the topic of war should be addressed in all subjects – I do not think that all subjects are appropriate for that. But most of the subjects can pay attention to it, I mean

mostly the group of social subjects.”
18 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Some respondents expressed frustration about their lack of exposure in school to the history (and legacy) of the war/conflict in their region.

Some respondents felt a new subject or module was necessary to teach children about reconciliation and the legacies of the past.

“Introduce a subject in the schools... which would elaborate the things like that [reconciliation]... some kind of ethics or something like that...”
25 year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“The classes could cover the reasons why it would be good to have reconciliation, give your own opinion, allow students to speak about it and say their thoughts about all that... to give comments, bring decisions, give suggestions...”
17 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Rather than dealing directly with issues relating to the Troubles, one respondent from Northern Ireland felt it was important to deal with the issue of conflict more generally, for example conflict between friends or conflict within the family. Other respondents expressed similar views, arguing that education in values, personal development and life skills would serve children better than classes addressing the war/Troubles and post-conflict reconciliation. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, one respondent in the 16-18 year old group remarked that issues of more relevance to young people should be covered in school, for example drugs.

³¹ For more information concerning curriculum developments in Northern Ireland, see Colwill, I. & Gallagher, C. (2007). Developing a curriculum for the twenty-first century: the experiences of England and Northern Ireland. *Prospects*, 37 (4), 411-425.

“They should talk with the students more about how fighting is not good and how we could improve the situation, to enable us to learn more.”

Eleven year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Encourage us to take care of each other and to listen to each other.”

Eleven year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“It [education] needs to have a constant expectation that people are going to be different, and that part of just good manners is learning how to get on with people who are going to have totally different views from yours and that you might find really, really hard to stomach, because you are going to meet them eventually.”

25 year old male, Northern Ireland

“Looking at conflict even in small terms, you know, even between friends rather than bringing in any of their religion when we are talking about it, just how you deal with it generally.”

24 year old female, Northern Ireland

“In my opinion, school as an educational institution should instil in young people – children, while they are still very young – a feeling for real values, such as... friendship, love, respect and other things...”

25 year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Life skills and anti-bullying and personal development and outdoor team-building and stuff, that is so important... for young people to be doing that sort of stuff... In secondary schools I just think it is so important for confidence in young people that life skills are taught and personal development is done.”

25 year old female, Northern Ireland

“One class a week on life skills... it would just look at general conflict and issues, you know, current issues, current affairs...”

24 year old female, Northern Ireland

Some respondents emphasised the importance of learning about countries and cultures other than Northern Ireland and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

“You need to know what is going on in other countries as well as here... So you would be very narrow-minded if you learned just about your own country.”

17 year old male, Northern Ireland

“You know, ‘in Northern Ireland there is two religions’... there is more than two, there is hundreds of religions! And we can learn about the whole lot of them too... You know what I mean? And then we could cut that problem out too.”

24 year old male, Northern Ireland

When? Age appropriateness

Several respondents expressed concern about ‘burdening’ children with the legacies of the past.

Several respondents felt it was important for primary-age children to start off by learning about difference and learning to accept difference.

One respondent from Bosnia and Herzegovina thought it was important to start addressing these issues at primary level. However another respondent thought it was not appropriate to deal with such issues at primary level. A respondent from Northern Ireland similarly believed it was *not* appropriate to deal directly with issues relating to the conflict with primary-age children. She commented that focusing on issues related to cultural identity would be more important than directly addressed Troubles-related issues with young children.

“Children should not be burdened with politics and such nonsense because it will not, in my opinion, help them much at all.”

25 year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“I don’t think you should put the worry of the world on a child’s shoulders, you know...”

24 year old female, Northern Ireland

“You don’t want to get into too much with them too young, because again I just think it takes away from the naïveté of being a child... if you are just given all this unnecessary information and you really don’t know what to do with it anyway.”

25 year old female, Northern Ireland

Some respondents thought it would be more appropriate to address these issues at post-primary level.

“I think that when you hit sort of early adolescence, maybe between sort of ten and twelve, then you can introduce it and say, you know, this is what happened here, and this is why it happened’, and educate them from that

age... In secondary school I think it definitely needs to be addressed, because kids are starting to form their own views about their own identity, where they are from, who they are friends with... And I think that if it is addressed in the right way, it could benefit kids.”

25 year old female, Northern Ireland

Respondents in both regions expressed concern about the possible negative psychological effects of exposing children to conflict-related issues.

“If they really want to deal with the legacy of the type of conflict, there needs to be a massive look at this [availability of educational psychologists to help conflict-affected children], especially with the mental health element of the educational psychologist and so on. Because if you want to deal with that, then if you can deal with it at an early age, then you are going to be able to deal with it when it comes to suicide prevention and so on later on in the day, which is a massive thing here in West Belfast at the minute with young people committing suicide and so on.”

25 year old male, Northern Ireland

How? More Mixing in Schools

One respondent who lived in an interface area that had experienced high levels of sectarian violence cautioned against the wholesale integration of schools in Northern Ireland.

“At the minute, I don’t think it would be safe for kids, for schools to be integrated, Catholic and Protestant. I just don’t think that would be safe because something would happen and the kids don’t need to see it, because it is just going to

make things worse.”

25 year old male, Northern Ireland

However, a majority of respondents in both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Northern Ireland expressed a desire for schools to be more mixed.³²

“If you are taught in an all-girls or all-boys Catholic Grammar, are they going to be able to fairly address it? And if you go to a school on the Shankill Road are they going to be able to fairly address it? Will you get both sides of the story? Which is again why I think the integrated school is the best idea because you would hope that [they] would get a more rounded idea than only half the picture.”

25 year old female, Northern Ireland

“They should probably be mixed schools so... They wouldn’t know and then they would probably get along.”

Eleven year old male, Northern Ireland

“In our school I would like that we don’t divide ourselves. I mean, there are schools where children still do not go to school at the same time if they are different religions and so on. They are not allowed to talk to each other. We shouldn’t have these kinds of problems. I mean, we should understand that we are all people, we were all born and we will all die, and we should concentrate on the nice things and make sure that peace prevails.”

Eleven year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Do you see this business of, like, Protestant and Catholic schools and stuff like that? I honestly don’t think that is right... What is the point of teaching the children of the future now if you are still going to have these divisions of Protestants, Catholics..?”

18 year old female, Northern Ireland

“It would be okay if we were all together. That is how it was in one school... Croats are on one floor and Muslims on the other.³³ That is so stupid. If we are attending the same school, then we should do everything together.”

17 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“At the end of the day, if you can bring Protestants and Catholics together in the way they do with Step Up Programmes – like, the science course – I am sure you would be able to bring two schools together, not closing off one school for the Catholics and one school for the Protestants.³⁴ But just mixing everyone in together, whoever they are.”

17 year old male, Northern Ireland

“If all schools were unified, then children would begin to spend time together and overcome hatred.”

24 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Integrated schools, I think, are an excellent idea in terms of, you know, not seeing them as something different. You know, they are not labelled as something, but they are just my

³² Currently less than 6% of children in Northern Ireland attend integrated schools.

³³ See reference to the ‘two schools under one roof’ phenomenon in the Methodology section, above.

³⁴ The University of Ulster’s Step-Up Programme provides an opportunity for pupils from secondary schools located in areas of social and economic disadvantage to gain entry to and complete programmes of study at Higher Education Institutions. For more information, see <http://www.ulster.ac.uk/aep/stepup/about.html>.

classmate. They might end up being my friend, they might not, you know. But, definitely, I think integration is good...

25 year old female, Northern Ireland

How? Inter-group contact

Bosnia and Herzegovina

In the absence of mixed schools, many eleven year old respondents in Bosnia and Herzegovina expressed a desire to be able to visit schools in a different entity (i.e., to visit schools in Republika Srpska, if they lived in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and vice versa) and to meet children of different national/ethnic backgrounds.³⁵ One respondent in the 16-18 age group suggested that gatherings be organised for young people of different nationalities to come together “and then to talk about it [the war], everyone from his/her side... to discuss it”. Another respondent in this age group suggested that schools from the east and west sides of Mostar pair up in some way in order to avoid tension and scuffles between their respective students.³⁶ 24-25 year old respondents agreed that inter-group contact was important. One respondent in this age group believed that, although sometimes difficult and awkward at first, inter-group contact was necessary and positive. Considering the financial implications of such initiatives, another respondent pointed out that investing in inter-

group need not be too expensive.

“To visit schools in Republika Srpska, to meet children there and to make new friendships with them... so that we would not look at them as other nationalities but as our friends.”

Eleven year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“[Teachers] should take us to visit other schools, for example in Travnik where the students are Bosniak. So I think our teachers should make contact with teachers from these schools, and in this way we can help reconciliation between people so that both we the Croats and they the Bosniaks can create a relationship and be in contact with each other.”

Eleven year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Maybe gatherings, seminars, joint events... organising some competitions, something, maybe creative workshops, so that the children spend time together.”

25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Northern Ireland

One respondent in the 24-25 age group felt that inter-group contact from an early age was beneficial in building relationships and breaking down barriers. Another respondent felt that inter-group contact was important to develop mutual understanding. She believed that ignorance led to a fear of the ‘other’.³⁷

³⁵ Community-based inter-group contact initiatives have existed in Northern Ireland since the early 1970s and the Department of Education introduced a funding scheme to encourage contact between schools since 1987. Similar initiatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina seem to be fewer and less formalised.

³⁶ Mostar, the fifth-largest city in Bosnia and Herzegovina, is situated on the Neretva River. The city’s population is comprised primarily of Bosniaks and Croats, with the side of the city west of the river being mainly Croat, and the east side mainly Bosniak. Support for the local football clubs, *Zrinjski* and *Velež*, is also divided along ethnic lines.

³⁷ A schools’ community relations programme has operated in Northern Ireland since the 1980s, as well as other organisations which support community contact. However, research indicates that only a small percentage of young people have had access to contact opportunities.

“Kids, they don’t have a clue what the other culture is all about, and that is the fear... So if they can meet or if they can see... what camogie is, what hurling is, what gaelic is, what Ulster-Scots dancing is...”

24 year old female, Northern Ireland

“You get to see that they are just the same as everybody else and it takes away the whole kind of... the whole mystery of it.”

25 year old female, Northern Ireland

Several respondents argued that in order for them to be of value, cross community initiatives had to confront – as opposed to steer clear of – difficult issues. One respondent advised that inter-group contact should be ongoing, rather than a collection of isolated, one-off events.

“I think there was a lot of stuff like that, that has been going on for a long time that sort of sounds very worthy, but actually doesn’t involve anybody doing anything difficult.”

24 year old female, Northern Ireland

“At the simplest level it’s about creating opportunities in a safe way for relationships to be built and to be able to allow those relationships to flourish, not just to be one-off events to tick a box.”

25 year old male, Northern Ireland

“More cross community stuff done in school... and meaningful, issue-based, not ‘let’s get prods and taigs together and go bowling’, because there’s a lot of that going on as well.”

25 year old male, Northern Ireland

“Opportunities to meet people from different backgrounds, particularly different class backgrounds as well...”

25 year old male, Northern Ireland

Several of the 16-18 year old respondents were involved in the Step Up Programme, an outreach initiative of the University of Ulster, and saw this as a good model for bringing Catholic and Protestant young people.³⁹ Another respondent in this age group remarked that inter-group contact was necessary in youth clubs where, according to her, “most bullying goes on”.

Some eleven year old respondents appeared to favour the idea of more inter-group contact through organised, school-based activities. Eleven year old boys in Northern Ireland seemed particularly keen on the idea of inter-group contact through sport.³⁸ Several respondents in this age group echoed the sentiments of one of the Bosnian eleven year olds, arguing that parents’ reservations should not stop children from being afforded the opportunity to mix across the traditional divide. One eleven year old respondent suggested that inter-group contact should continue into post-primary level education.

³⁸ The Department of Education has provided significant funding for this kind of activity since 1987 through the Schools Community Relations Programme. See http://www.deni.gov.uk/20review_of_schools_cr_prog.pdf. Also Smith, A. and Robinson, A. (1992) <http://www.ccruni.gov.uk/research/csc/policy.htm>

How? Multiple Resources

Multimedia/Internet

Children and young people in both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Northern Ireland suggested using audiovisual resources such as films, documentaries and photographs to bring learning about the past more interesting.³⁹

“Watching videos, listening to different CDs... that goes deeper to our brains, when we see images and hear the sound, rather than just learning about it.”
17 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Using the kind of multimedia technology that’s getting more and more advanced would be a useful tool... Whatever it is, it’s about making it as real as possible for the target audience.”
25 year old male, Northern Ireland

“It is so recent, there is fantastic resources available... like, there is so much film footage and things like that...”
24 year old female, Northern Ireland

“You know the way, like, for young children they might not understand... films like Mickybo [and Me]⁴⁰... children maybe like in P6, P5 would get it.”
Eleven year old female, Northern Ireland

Two respondents recommended *Epilogues*, a multimedia workshop education programme

exploring the underlying causes of conflict in Northern Ireland.⁴¹

“I really enjoyed the Epilogues because you had people who were affected, and how they were affected, and when people see that it’s hard-hitting, and you remember them a lot better.”
25 year old male, Northern Ireland

Whereas in Northern Ireland respondents were largely enthusiastic about the idea of using television news archives to make learning about the Troubles more interesting for children and young people, in Bosnia and Herzegovina several respondents expressed concern regarding the use of TV footage from the war as a teaching and learning resource. Indeed even some of the eleven year old respondents were aware of the potentially negative psychological effects for children of exposure to images from the war.

“Well, I know there are some [TV] programmes that talk about the war here, and about other crimes and so on... but I don’t like to watch that, and my parents don’t let me watch [them].”
Eleven year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“There are some shows on TV which really are a burden for children especially because they only talk about all the war happenings. But I think that they should talk about these things in the newspapers instead, because many children get ill and get illnesses when they see these images all the time on TV... psychological illnesses and so on.”
Eleven year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

³⁹ Over time, both BBC Northern Ireland and Channel 4 have developed educational programmes and websites addressing these issues.

⁴⁰ *Mickybo and Me* is a 2004 film about two boys obsessed with the film *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*. When the Troubles break out in Northern Ireland in 1970, the boys dream of escaping to Australia.

⁴¹ For more information about *Epilogues*, see <http://www.epilogues.net/Introduction.asp>

Older respondents were similarly hesitant about exposing children to potentially distressing images of the war. This might be explained by a natural tendency to protect young children from the horrors of war. Another possible explanation might be that older respondents still recalled the fear and distress they themselves had felt watching the news on television when they were growing up during the war.

“I knew that there was bombing going on. We had a TV and we could see... there were reports from different cities. We were afraid that... what if our father dies... what would...? It was horrible...”

24 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“We watched on TV what was happening... They were killing people and we saw what that all looks like.”

25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Respondents suggested that pupils be encouraged to use the **internet** to conduct their own independent research into conflict and reconciliation-related issues of particular interest to them. Several respondents felt the internet could be used as a tool, for example for pupils from different community backgrounds to meet, but also expressed reservations about the limitations of such initiatives.

“It would be good that schools have computers for students to write to each other... but you never know a person until you really meet them.”

25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“The kind of multimedia aspect, definitely... connecting young people together maybe...but it

cannot ever make up for face-to-face contact. It's all useful tools, but the bottom line is it's about building relationships and that has to be done on a one-to-one level.”

25 year old male, Northern Ireland

Local Environment

In addition to visits to schools with pupils of a different nationality or ethnic group, respondents in Bosnia and Herzegovina suggested visiting areas affected by the war “to see the buildings destroyed by shelling and other ruined facilities in different areas.” Outdoor or ‘on-location’ lectures were seen as a good opportunity to make learning more interesting and to enhance children and young people’s understanding of the past.

“Visits... or at least just to change the place, to get out of the classroom and visit different places. We should know where certain events happened... after all, it is our recent history.”

16 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Children should see what has happened in this area, what are the consequences... then they would most probably know more about it.”

17 year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

In addition to more contact with different schools and pupils of a different community background, respondents in Northern Ireland suggested school visits to ‘peace lines’ and to areas affected by the Troubles. One respondent recommended taking young people outside their ‘comfort zones’ to areas they would not normally visit. Other respondents suggested visits to

different churches and places of worship, as well as to museums, galleries and photography exhibitions to “let them see and make them think about it” and “to show how both communities suffered”.⁴² As in Bosnia and Herzegovina, such visits were seen as a good opportunity to make learning more interesting and to increase children and young people’s understanding of the past.

“They could take us to a trip to Belfast just to go see the history...”

Eleven year old male, Northern Ireland

“Taking them out around the areas that have been affected by it, even though most of them have been redeveloped now... say the Newtownards Road, the Bogside area in Londonderry, and all them sorts of places... take them up there, show them what damage has been done, taking them to the graveyards where people that have died, that have been killed unnecessarily, innocent civilians who have been killed because of it... that is the only way you are going to make it more interesting.”

16 year old male, Northern Ireland

“Take kids out, see if you take them to peace lines, where stuff has happened... the Ormeau Road, stuff has happened there... the top of my street... take them out, just let them see what it is like on both sides, because you can notice the

difference on one side and the other side and then let them hear their views... actually let them see and make them think about it.”

25 year old male, Northern Ireland

“Make them go to places where they actually think ‘no, I can’t go’... Let them go there, ask those people, make them actually want to know...”

18 year old female, Northern Ireland

“It just gives you a wider perspective and, again, a kind of lived experience. Things in textbooks are fine, but when you actually go into them yourself and have first-hand feelings of what it means to be there, to see things and to hear things that are strange or contrary... it’s really useful.”

25 year old male, Northern Ireland

People and stories as resources

For many respondents, hearing first-hand about real people’s experiences - of the Troubles in Northern Ireland and the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina - was a powerful learning experience.⁴³ Respondents were interested in hearing the older generation’s stories and stories from family members, in particular, were seen by some respondents as being a valuable, as yet untapped resource, for learning.⁴⁴ Respondents

⁴² These sorts of activities and visits already take place as part of the Cross-Community Contact Scheme (see footnote 35, above). However, there is an additional implication that the scheme perhaps could have a specific strand with an emphasis on helping children and young to understand what happened during the Troubles and why. A similar recommendation has been made by the Report of the Consultative Group on the Past, which recognised the “importance of education in building a better understanding of the nature and causes of the conflict.”

⁴³ The BBC Northern Ireland education website on the Troubles allows students to listen to the real life experiences of people affected. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/recent/troubles/index.shtml>

⁴⁴ EU PEACE III funding is being allocated for this purpose under Measure 2.1 (Acknowledging and Dealing with the Past), Strand 1 – ‘Addressing Legacy and Truth in Public Memory’. Projects will be funded which seek to “explore the legacy and memory of the conflict through truth recovery, documentation, story telling and the recording of complex history and experience”. This would include the development of educational materials which acknowledge and deal with the past aimed at different age groups. See <http://www.community-relations.org.uk/filestore/documents/Peacellad.pdf>.

in both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Northern Ireland felt that having guest speakers visit schools might be an interesting way to learn about the past.

“I suppose using people as resources is the only way to really connect it to them.”

25 year old female, Northern Ireland

“There is a huge difference when hearing it from someone who saw it all. It is easier for us to understand it all.”

16 year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“I would rather hear the stories of what happened to an individual person... it makes it more real.”

16 year old male, Northern Ireland

“I think the biggest resource would probably be people’s own family history. I think just getting people to go away and find out what they can and tell you what they can about it... It would be really interesting and it would give people a sort of incentive to find stuff out because it would be, you know, it is their history... Getting people to interview their families or whatever... because it is so recent there is fantastic resources available.”

24 year old female, Northern Ireland

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, respondents suggested that guest speakers could include people who lived through the war. However one respondent felt it would be better to learn about the war from ‘experts’. Other respondents stressed the importance of exposing children and young people to multiple perspectives from

people with different views.

“Some older ones who were in the war... to explain to us, to see the good and bad side of all that, to tell us about what has happened and not to have it happen again, to have people realise how bad it is and how many people were killed...”

17 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

In Northern Ireland, respondents similarly suggested inviting guest speakers – for example ex-combatants/ex-prisoners and church representatives – to speak to pupils about their own experiences of the Troubles. One respondent remarked that this would be a good way of exposing children and young people to a variety of different perspectives. While agreeing that inviting guest speakers was a good idea in principle, several respondents felt that it would very much depend on who the speaker was, and how it was done. One respondent felt it was important to invite guest speakers who were upbeat about the future.

“I think that getting some of the people that have lived through the Troubles, if they are still alive. There is bound to be ones still alive to talk about it....”

17 year old female, Northern Ireland

“Get people who have experienced it, who can talk about it first hand, rather than maybe third or fourth hand, you know?”

24 year old male, Northern Ireland

One respondent suggested that pupils’ own experiences also could be used as learning resources.

Interactive Methodologies

Many respondents in both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Northern Ireland observed that interactive methodologies were needed to engage students' interest in reconciliation-related issues.

*"They should make it interactive."
16 year old male, Northern Ireland*

*"It would be good if we were more involved during the class and not just listening to the professor... to have more discussion between professor and students, more questions..."
16 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina*

*"Split them up into groups of five, so therefore everybody's getting a voice... If you put them into small groups... you get to know people a lot better, you get to interact with people, you get your thoughts out."
24 year old male, Northern Ireland*

*"Some kind of interaction... more participation and not just listening... Usually it has a positive impact on young people."
25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina*

*"Bringing peer education, bringing stuff like that into school... something that is a wee bit more informal and may strike a chord better."
25 year old male, Northern Ireland*

Encourage critical thinking

Some respondents observed that it was important that the past be taught in a manner that encourages critical thinking on the part of pupils.

"Making them think themselves... that would actually be the best thing ever... They don't want you thinking for them... let them tell you what they think. You get a lot of results from them. A lot."

17 year old female, Northern Ireland

*"Anything that deepens their understanding and capacity to think critically about the world around them."
25 year old male, Northern Ireland*

*"I suppose the most important thing in most schools is just trying to... give people a chance to question things and meet other viewpoints as much as possible."
24 year old female, Northern Ireland*

Who should undertake the task?

Teachers

Several respondents in Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly in the 16-18 age group, felt that teachers should talk about their own experiences during the war. However one respondent was concerned that teachers' "own views would be transferred to us". Another respondent suggested a way of combating this would be to get teachers with different views and experiences to talk to pupils.

“A teacher who is familiar with what was happening before, maybe even one who experienced the war personally. Perhaps he would know better to explain to us than one who has just [heard about it].”

16 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“I think they [teachers] should tell it from their own perspective, in a way they have seen it. Most probably that would help children to easier understand it.”

17 year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Northern Ireland respondents in the 16-18 age group were equally interested in hearing about teachers' own personal experiences of the Troubles.

“Especially if they came from Belfast or the came from Londonderry where it was more violent... They have got their own personal experiences, not because of their age, but because they have learned about it more in depth, so they have... And they kind of tell pupils of their experience and all and they can tell them what it was like. So teachers play a major role, and also they have a lot of information there to give the students.”

16 year old male, Northern Ireland

“Well all the teachers that I have ever spoken about it, they are, like... they are really good to explain it really well. Because most of them are of the generation that it happened to, like, when it was at its worst, so they can tell you what actually happened here... I think teachers that it happened to, they should speak to their class or something and tell them first-hand what happened to them or what their experiences were.”

17 year old male, Northern Ireland

However some respondents in the older age group, 24-25 year olds, expressed concern that personal experience of the Troubles might prejudice a teacher's approach to dealing with conflict-related issues in the classroom. Some said that training might be required in order to help teachers deal with these issues in as objective a manner as possible. One respondent, for example, felt specific training might not be necessary, but that it was important for teachers to always approach conflict-related issues sensitively. Another respondent said that not just teachers but everyone working at schools should be aware of the influence their words and actions have on children and young people.

“Professors should be totally neutral in order not to give lectures according to their own views.”

18 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Teachers teach from their own experience and their own thought pattern, anyway. So if you have somebody who, I suppose teachers could be a good bit older... teachers have been kind of hurt in certain ways, you know, they might bring it across in a certain light.”

25 year old male, Northern Ireland

“Maybe some kind of training so that professors do not put any bias on what they are talking about.”

16 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“You would need to be qualified to talk about it, you know... Sometimes people find that experience qualifies you - because you were

there at the time, it qualifies you to teach others. I don't think that is the case..."

25 year old male, Northern Ireland

"It would be good to train teachers, since not everybody would understand things in the same way."

17 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"I think training should be made available... There should be something in place to prepare staff, because as heart-breaking as it is to say there probably is a great deal of ignorance and of inherited prejudice in a lot of staff members within educational institutions within Northern Ireland... There are probably tainted perspectives that would need to be addressed or relationships facilitated prior to taking responsibility for school children in these circumstances."

25 year old male, Northern Ireland

"I do not think that if they completed university they are much clearer about it than we are. So... they should learn about it in order then to teach us and tell us about it."

16 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"They need to be educated in how to be neutral, I think, and how to teach in a neutral way where you own views are masked and you don't... you can't try and force your opinion onto who you are teaching, because it is not fair."

25 year old female, Northern Ireland

"I think it is important that everyone in the school has, you know, is made aware that they are going to be giving people messages about this stuff... whether they mean to or not."

24 year old female, Northern Ireland

One respondent criticised the way in which teacher education is provided in Northern Ireland. Another respondent felt that all teachers should have an awareness of the two main religious traditions in Northern Ireland. She argued that it was important:

"...that they can have those discussions, so that if a pupil goes up to them and asks them a question that they have the answers as well."

25 year old female, Northern Ireland

Another respondent was in favour of encouraging greater ethnic diversity amongst teachers in Northern Ireland. Familiarity with the area pupils live in was seen as crucial. For example, one respondent commented that it was important that teachers came from the areas they taught in in order to be able to understand the day-to-day challenges faced by children living there. Another respondent made a similar observation, commenting that it was important for teachers coming in from the 'outside' to be aware of the history of the area they taught in.

"Even the way that teachers are educated is so kind of segregated almost... and people tend to sort of shuffle through a system that keeps them within the same brackets."

25 year old female, Northern Ireland

"One thing would be to get international exchanges effective immediately to get teachers and those who are training to be teachers in Northern Ireland to get the hell out of Northern Ireland to develop some kind of perspective on how to do things elsewhere... All teachers could

benefit from perhaps even just exchanging within the institutions [Stranmillis and St Mary's Colleges], mix them up immediately, you know, have a rotational programme or something like that... or certainly an increased dialogue and, if nothing else, just an awareness of similarities and differences in the approach that they have. But my recommendation, for what it is worth, would be to get international exchanges... I mean, get prospective teachers that are teaching in Queen's, get them out to teach in Tokyo or Hong Kong or something like that... something that is absolutely alien that will force the reassessments, a questioning and a willingness to be open to suggestion that will only benefit the kids that they are teaching."
 25 year old male, Northern Ireland

"Out of my whole five years at [post-primary school] I think I had one teacher from Derry. One. There was none from Derry at all... so therefore probably because they were from Donegal they had no interest and it didn't affect them, so they felt they had no need to talk about it."
 24 year old male, Northern Ireland

Who should undertake the task?

Youth Workers/ Informal Education

One respondent commented that addressing the legacies of the past should not be left entirely to the formal education sector. Another respondent echoed these sentiments, commenting that the formal and informal

education sectors had great potential to complement each other. One respondent suggested that youth workers could play an important role in schools. She commented that young people might engage better if reconciliation-related initiatives were facilitated by youth workers.

"It would probably be good even if outside youth workers or, you know, people who are trained up and who actually do have a lot of knowledge and that is their job - peace and reconciliation - and them going into the schools... Pupils are more likely to open up and say what they really think, too, to people who aren't their strict teachers everyday."
 25 year old female, Northern Ireland

One respondent commented on the role of informal education in contributing to reconciliation in Northern Ireland. Another respondent observed that teachers were "stuck to a curriculum" and that this might limit the extent to which they could engage children and young people with reconciliation-related issues. One respondent observed that better cooperation was needed between teachers and youth workers in order to be able to address conflict-related issues with children and young people. Another respondent echoed this sentiment, commenting that teachers and youth workers are unsure of each other's roles.

"I think sometimes it is hard because teachers don't understand a youth worker's role either. And maybe some youth workers don't either, to be fair. So definitely more partnership..."
 25 year old male, Northern Ireland

“Lift the barriers between teachers and youth workers. Let them work together instead of against each other. Don’t see each other as a threat, see each other as a resource... ‘I can use him for the benefit of the young people’... then do that!”
24 year old male, Northern Ireland

Another respondent commented that the legacies of the past were already being addressed by informal education in Northern Ireland, albeit with limited success.⁴⁵

One respondent said that training for youth workers needed to be improved.

“I think probably the bulk of good work done to date has been through informal education. I’m talking mainly about youth work, I suppose, when I’m talking about informal education... and the standard of a lot of that is still fairly poor, and it still revolves around diversionary activities which means going playing football, pool, etc... rather than from the point of maybe young people have the capacity and are a resource and can deal with these issues themselves if you support them to do so. So I think it has a huge role to play, but I think it is a long way from fulfilling its potential.”
25 year old male, Northern Ireland

“Training in general needs to be better, and organisational support... there has to be real buy-in, so it has to be policy-driven, and lots of organisations free staff up and give them the support to do so... particularly where, at the harder end of things, where you really are talking about safety issues and personal safety

issues, in doing that type of work.”
25 year old male, Northern Ireland

Who should undertake the task?

Community/Adult Education

Some respondents observed that it should not be left entirely to schools to address the legacies of the past, and that some form of community and/or adult education might be beneficial. For example, one respondent said he would like to see “the same types of themes being taught to adults so they are on the same wavelength as the young people coming through.”

“I think community education and community work is essential in getting any form of reconciliation to come about, because people in conflict-affected areas rely a lot on their community workers and would trust their community workers a lot more than they will trust anybody from outside... So I think that community workers and the community sector in general would need to be involved in any sort of reconciliation work.”
25 year old female, Northern Ireland

“Not only for schools, but for all people... some sort of gathering... where it would be voluntary for anyone to come, and those who do not want to come do not need to come, but in any case that would raise people’s level of awareness.”
25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

⁴⁵ One of the statutory functions of the Youth Service Northern Ireland is to encourage cross-community activity. The service has a policy and a number of projects which aim to do that, e.g. “R ShaRd FutR”. See http://www.ycni.org/ycni_projects/rshrdftur/rshrdftur_projects.

“I think that oftentimes adult informal education is something that has been forgotten... You will have to remember that if the most wonderful education programme on the planet was put together out of this project, out of this research, that it can only be of benefit to the children that were coming through it. Their parents, and their uncles and their aunties haven’t come through it... So, what is in place for adults who haven’t come through a formal education system.”
 25 year old male, Northern Ireland

Who should undertake the task?

Minister/Department of Education

With regard to addressing the legacies of the past, a number of respondents pointed to the limitations of school-based initiatives in the absence of support from the authorities. For example, one respondent in Bosnia and Herzegovina suggested that the Ministry of Education “make a law that all children need to go to school together” and “not to have separate schools for Serb, Croat and Muslim children.” With regard to funding for reconciliation-related initiatives, one respondent from Northern Ireland commented that the Education Minister “has a huge role to play in changing that [the funding agenda] and getting it right and creating an agenda that is equitable, as opposed to being equality-driven.”⁴⁶

“School can of course talk with us and everything, but in the end that doesn’t help

much because it all depends on who are the authorities. School really does its best, but when someone [government Minister] comes and says ‘this is how it is going to be’, what can school do?”

Eleven year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“They [the Department of Education] should be sitting down now talking with current educators about the future of the system in Northern Ireland and these ideas should be discussed in openness, transparency... So their role now is one to get their ear to the ground, very keenly, and listen very, very carefully to what is being said, and to contribute as well... There should be an admission and a willingness to listen now and to really just act upon the recommendations...”

25 year old male, Northern Ireland

“Make a law that all children need to go to school together... and not to have separate schools for Serb, Croat and Muslim children. I would get rid of the division in schools. I would create a law.”

25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Well, I might try to persuade the like Prime Minister or something to like make the schools mix with Catholics and Protestants in the north or something... like Catholics and Protestants mixing together in one school.”

Eleven year old male, Northern Ireland

⁴⁶ The Northern Ireland Department of Education is currently conducting a Review of Community Relations Policy. See http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/20-community_relations_pg/community_relations-newpage-2.htm.

SUMMARY

In both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Northern Ireland, despite a number of qualifications, there was broad agreement among respondents that reconciliation, in particular the issue of dealing with the past, should be directly addressed in schools.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, respondents tended to emphasise the need for contact between schools with pupils of different ethnicities/nationalities, for example through school exchanges. By contrast, in Northern Ireland respondents pointed to the need for schools to be more mixed.

The use of interactive teaching methodologies and multiple teaching and learning resources was recommended by respondents in both regions in order to make learning about the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Troubles in Northern Ireland more interesting. Inviting guest speakers and taking pupils on visits to war/conflict-affected areas were also seen as potentially beneficial.

There was consensus among respondents that their recommendations had implications for teacher education as well as for youth work provision. Particularly in Northern Ireland, it was felt that more partnership between teachers and youth workers in addressing sensitive conflict and reconciliation-related issues with children and young people.



6. In their own words... Children and Young People's Hopes for the Future

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"I would like my country to be an example of peace in the world. That is my wish."

Eleven year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"I hope there will never be war here again."

Eleven year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"Just that we shouldn't be fighting over what religion we are. We should be trying to get along. And just to have fun."

Eleven year old female, Northern Ireland

"I hope one day everything will be better... and that our goals will be achieved and that the voice of children and young people will be listened to, as well. We are told that we don't know enough... but that is not right. Sometimes children and young people know even more than adults."

Eleven year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"Well, my biggest hope is that these three nationalities that live in Bosnia and Herzegovina create a connection that lasts. This would be my biggest dream... that these three nations in our country one day reconcile with each other... They don't need to be good friends with each other, but at least to try a little bit."

Eleven year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"Just for everyone to get along. And no rioting. But obviously there is always going to be rioting and stuff coming up to the eleventh and twelfth, but everyone not to get on their high horse about it. And just get on with it. It is getting boring."

17 year old female, Northern Ireland

"I hope it [Bosnia and Herzegovina] develops in all aspects – industry, agriculture... and that more people stay here, rather than leave the country and emigrate..."

17 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"Hopefully the peace gates will be brought down and everyone can just live as they want... and Catholics can socialise with Protestants without, you know, like them getting into trouble for coming into a Protestant area, and vice versa."

18 year old female, Northern Ireland

"I hope that the situation [here] will change. I hope that living conditions, at least, will get better, and that many things would change... in the sense of interpersonal relationships, the economy..."

16 year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"I hope everyone can live wherever they want... get married, get together with whoever they want... and not have to worry about something because of who you believe in or what you don't believe."

16 year old female, Northern Ireland

"In Bosnia and Herzegovina everyone is not thinking the same. Each person has a different opinion, different views, and cannot agree on one issue. They could agree if they sat together and considered the issue. They could, and we would have a bright future if the entities and nations came to an agreement."

18 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"I just hope that everyone will just sort it out and like there is not point to it... it is just a waste of lives and everything else and time. It would be like such a better place if they just stopped fighting and just got on with it, so that people wouldn't be put off coming here, and then it would be better."

17 year old male, Northern Ireland

"I hope that there would not be so much hatred between people... I hope that many people will spend time together, regardless of their nationality."

16 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"My hopes are that in years to come, I will be walking around the town in a Rangers top with my friend wearing a Celtic top... you know, I hope that it does really, really happen, and that all the trouble is over and there will be no need for CCTV or peace lines... And I hope that it really does work."

17 year old male, Northern Ireland

"Well, I hope that future generations do not experience what we did... I hope that this project is going to bring something better for future generations."

25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"That people can move on, people can live with each other, and the fighting's going to be laid to rest."

24 year old male, Northern Ireland

"I hope for a better future, in all aspects... that I will get a job without problems, regardless of my family name..."

24 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"Build people's confidence and their self esteem and organise them and let them have ownership of their own futures... That is what I would hope for."

25 year old male, Northern Ireland

"First... improvement of our economic situation... Then second, that reconciliation should happen one day... that we are free to go anywhere..."

24 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"I would hope that by the time [my son] is my age, he will have lived through some form of normality. I wouldn't like to think [he] will be sitting in a chair saying: 'There is semtex in my back garden and my Dad got beaten up'... the sorts of things I have seen and done. I don't want that for him."

25 year old female, Northern Ireland

"I want peace, I want a better life... More opportunities for young people..."

25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"My hopes for the place is now that the A/B divide is beginning to dissolve a little bit, that the people in power simply won't sell the place off to the highest bidder. Because already we have economic investment and the much-flaunted idea of prosperity... I hope that the place can live up to its potential creatively, not necessarily always in the interest or in the name of capital and commerce..."

25 year old male, Northern Ireland

"For Bosnia and Herzegovina, I hope it will be better. It cannot be worse! I hope it will be better. I would love that. For myself and for others."

24 year old male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"My hopes would be that we will reach some kind of agreement ... and get to a point where no-one feels fear to have to say, you know: 'My Dad is a policeman' or, you know: 'My Dad is a Sinn Féin counsellor'... And that there is not that stigma attached to being labelled as being, you know, Protestant or Catholic. That you can say: 'Do you know what? I am a person who lives in Northern Ireland', you know, regardless of

whether I am Northern Irish or British or Irish..."

25 year old female, Northern Ireland

"That not all young people leave Bosnia and Herzegovina... that they would stay here and fight for our country so that it doesn't happen that some foreigner comes from abroad and buys our companies and then we work for him. I hope it will not be like that."

25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"I hope that our own government starts working properly and that, you know, the counsellors get on with doing normal stuff."

24 year old female, Northern Ireland

"I hope one day, at least if not for me then at least for my children, that it would be like it was before [the war]. That they would have the kind of childhood I had."

25 year old female, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"Just that people would keep working towards the peace process, and that it wouldn't break down again. And that people would realise that things have moved on..."

25 year old female, Northern Ireland

North
Atlantic
Ocean



• DERRY/
LONDONDERRY

**NORTHERN
IRELAND**

• BELFAST

Irish
Sea

7. *“If you had one question you wanted an answer to, what would it be..?”*

Northern Ireland respondents’ questions about the Troubles

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“Why all the Troubles started. And why it was all bombing and all the Catholics and all the Protestants were all separated.”

17 year old female, Northern Ireland

“Like, why there’s riots.”

16 year old female, Northern Ireland

“Why? Why? Why did it start? Why did it have to happen? Is there a need for it? Because if you think about it, there isn’t.”

18 year old female, Northern Ireland

“I still don’t really understand why it all started and why it is still going on...”

16 year old male, Northern Ireland

“I want to know like, why it all started, like how it all came to be like this and what they think could change it and well, yeah, why there is like such a big divide.”

17 year old female, Northern Ireland

“You see, that is the one thing I never understood and I know it is a silly thing, but I never understood why it happened. Because there are probably a lot of factors that I am probably aware of, but just not aware of right now. But I have never fully understood why it happened. Or why it couldn’t have been prevented very easily.”

17 year old male, Northern Ireland

“Like, how it started and why it started. Stuff like that.”

17 year old male, Northern Ireland

“Why did it start in the first place? I don’t know really.”

16 year old female, Northern Ireland

“Basically what I would ask: ‘Why?’ Because like it is not actually explained to you, like fair enough you probably know about King Billy and stuff, whatever it is you learned in first year or whatever it is in history, but that is it, you don’t learn anything else.”

18 year old female, Northern Ireland

“Well for one, how it started. How it started and why it started. When, and just everything. You know what I want to know, I would like to know what was going on.”

16 year old male, Northern Ireland

“Questions that I would like answers to is: Why keep on going on about something that stopped years ago? Why make it, why stop your kids? Because I have friends that they want their social lives with us, but because Mummy and Daddy are very strict on the Catholic and Protestant thing they won’t allow them to have Catholic friends or Protestant friends, so I am just thinking: why draw back your children when they want to be, try and do better, you know create a better world, why are you holding them back? Why do you want them to be still living in the past?”

18 year old female, Northern Ireland

“People need to know how it started and why it started. And if they don’t know that there it is just going to turn out into what it went to forty years ago, because people were never taught this.”

17 year old male, Northern Ireland



8. Conclusions and Recommendations

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Conclusions

The funding for this report was provided by the European Union Peace and Reconciliation Programme for Northern Ireland. The findings from the research have been made available to partner agencies in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is hoped that these will be translated into the local language and may form the basis for recommendations for further development in that region. There is no doubt that the added value of completing the research in both regions has highlighted some of the common concerns of children and young people to understand the violent conflicts within their own society.

In Northern Ireland the completion of this project also coincided with the publication of the Report of the Consultative Group on the Past. The following conclusions and recommendations relate specifically to the potential role of education in dealing with the past and promoting reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

- **Education needs to explicitly address the recent past**

This report supports the recommendation made by the Consultative Group on the Past that education programmes be developed “which inform young people, in a balanced way, about the nature and impact of the conflict”.⁴⁹ Young people in both Northern Ireland and Bosnia and Herzegovina indicated clearly that education has a positive and distinctive role to play in helping successive generations understand the recent history of violent conflict even though it may be sensitive, controversial and, some would argue, too recent. It is also clear that young people do not want the past to be ignored, nor do they want to dwell on negative aspects of the past. Instead, they want to understand what happened and why, and how to create a more positive future.

The children and young people interviewed demonstrated an awareness that issues relating to conflict and to post-conflict reconciliation need to be addressed sensitively and in an age-appropriate way that includes multiple perspectives and takes account of the hurt and pain of victims and survivors. Even among

⁴⁹ Page 26, Report of the Consultative Group on the Past - <http://www.cgpni.org/>.

those who felt that it may be too early to do this, there was some acknowledgement that at least the task itself was legitimate and necessary and that the process should be started. This is particularly important given that, with each passing year, we are losing opportunities to make most benefit in terms of access to the direct resources and knowledge that we have about the conflict.

How, then, do we as a society respond to this educational challenge? At worst it is simply not being negligent or modelling avoidance. At best it is about helping understanding and also about trying to give some kind of positive encouragement for the future. What is clear is that there needs to be political consensus that this is a legitimate task for schools and other organisations (including the informal sector) to begin to tackle, otherwise teachers and educators will be operating in a vulnerable environment.

- **There is a need for better clarity around the concept of reconciliation**

There is a clear need to provide schools with more support in exploring and clarifying the concept of reconciliation. In Northern Ireland, the statutory requirement for Local and Global Citizenship at Key Stage 3 (for 11-14 year olds) requires that pupils have opportunities to investigate “ways of managing conflict and promoting community relations and reconciliation”. The youth work curriculum, ‘A Model for Effective Practice’ has similar provisions. However respondents’ lack of clarity concerning reconciliation suggests that teaching

and learning resources directly addressing the concept might be of particular use.

- **Education needs to help young people understand *why* the conflict happened, from a range of perspectives**

Those interviewed, particularly the 16-18 year olds in Northern Ireland, were clearly keen to understand the underlying causes of the conflict. The findings from this research reinforce some of the findings from the Report of the Consultative Group on the Past, which recognises the “importance of education in building a better understanding of the nature and causes of the conflict”.⁵¹ Of course it will not be possible, nor indeed is it desirable, to have a single agreed interpretation of the past. This suggests that the task can only be undertaken if there is a commitment to include multiple perspectives and encourage critical thinking. Children may be exposed to views and attitudes with which their parents disagree and, as such, even though it may be uncomfortable, recognition among parents is needed that this is a legitimate approach.

- **Crucial role of educators**

Whether or not educators accept it as a legitimate task, it is clear that young people themselves consider that educators have an important role and responsibility to foster understanding and to contribute towards reconciliation. There is an argument for widespread awareness raising and training within the teaching profession and with youth and community workers as well as engagement with professional organisations and unions.

⁴⁸ Page 26, Ibid.

Educators need to be consulted about their willingness to undertake the task and what support they might require.

- **More and better collaboration between formal and non-formal education sectors is needed**

Consideration should be given to some form of joint training for teachers and youth workers on these issues to facilitate positive, constructive dialogue between the formal and informal sectors in order for them to maximise their potential to complement each other. It is imperative that we draw on the expertise and pedagogy available across the spectrum of education provision. There are enormous benefits to be gained in this area from joint training and active collaboration across the formal and informal education sectors. This kind of cross-fertilisation can help produce richer approaches rooted in the experiences and concerns of young people and their communities.

- **Appropriate educational resources and guidance are needed**

The Report of the Consultative Group on the Past points to concerns “that resources are not being made available to support the next generation to cope with the legacy of the conflict” in Northern Ireland.⁵¹ The Report also advises that resources are needed to assist young people “to guard against any distorted perspective on normality”.⁵² Developing an acceptable multi-perspective approach to contested events is clearly an educational task

which requires the support of key agencies such as curriculum authorities and publishers. Considerable educational and pedagogical expertise is also needed to develop age-appropriate texts, websites and other digital and media-based resources.

As well as being interactive and user-friendly, such resources should challenge children and young people’s values and attitudes and facilitate the development of critical thinking skills, in line with the Consultative Group on the Past’s recommendation that young people be “provided with the skills necessary to ensure there is no repeat of the past”.⁵³ Also in line with the findings of the Consultative Group on the Past, consideration should be given to the development of an archive of stories, for educational purposes, relating to people’s experiences of the conflict.

It is worth noting that new social networking and Web 2.0 technologies offer young people exciting opportunities to create their own resources and to invite others to interact with and co-create and such resources. It is vital that formal and informal educators are comfortable with these technologies and the pedagogical benefits they offer.

- **Education should encourage intergenerational dialogue**

Whilst many of the children and young people we interviewed referred to hearing about conflict from within their own family, there are also clearly many instances where issues are

⁴⁹ Page 26, Ibid

⁵⁰ Page 71, Ibid.

⁵¹ Page 37, Ibid.

not spoken about within families. This particularly seems to be the case in BiH, where the ferocity of the war had such a profound impact. Opinion is divided on the reliability and impartiality of the perspectives that are passed between generations and families, tied up with references to passing on bitterness, prejudice and intolerance. We need to understand more how intergenerational dialogue works, in terms of knowledge and attitudes. Consideration should be given to providing funding for a pilot study on this theme, which could involve older people (for example, grandparents) acting as resources in schools. In Northern Ireland, this could feed into the recommendation made by the Consultative Group on the Past encouraging young people's participation in storytelling initiatives. Ideally, such initiatives should include an investigative dimension and facilitate the development of critical thinking skills in young people.

- **We have a duty to consult with children and young people themselves**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) requires that we consult children and young people about matters that affect them and take their views into account when developing policy. This research highlights the value of consulting with children and young people, and demonstrates how, even amongst young people themselves, it will be difficult to find consensus on what educational approach should be adopted. There is a challenge here for educators to go beyond consultation to the point where young people are co-creators of new resources and narratives.

Specific Recommendations

The education system in Northern Ireland is in the midst of significant structural and curricular change. Prior to a common curriculum NI had also adopted an educational policy position in relation to the conflict (DE Circular 1982/21) which stated that all teachers had a responsibility to contribute towards the improvement of community relations. This policy was translated into practice through Education for Mutual Understanding as a cross-curricular theme in the 1980s and 1990s and through cross-community contact programmes. With the advent of the statutory curriculum in 1989, common programmes were also adopted for the teaching of History and Religious Education (R.E.) and, most recently, Education for Local and Global Citizenship, which is conceptually grounded in universal human rights and responsibilities.

In the years following the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement (1998), control of education has been devolved to a new Northern Ireland Assembly with a locally elected Minister of Education and a Northern Ireland Assembly Education Committee. A Review of Public Administration (RPA) means that a new, single Education and Skills Authority (ESA) will finally be established from January 2010. This will bring together many of the former responsibilities of local Education and Library Boards and curriculum authorities. Educators are also awaiting the outcome of a review of teacher education. Alongside these structural changes, there has been a long-running debate leading to the ending of academic selection at age eleven and considerable uncertainty about arrangements for the future transfer of children

from primary to post-primary school. This has meant that other education issues have received less attention in recent times.

Nevertheless, significant progress has been made towards the introduction of a new Northern Ireland curriculum which places considerable emphasis on learning outcomes and skills. The new curriculum framework includes a number of potential opportunities for the inclusion of teaching and learning related to the Troubles as part of the recent history of Northern Ireland. For example, one of the main aims of the revised curriculum is to “develop the young person as a contributor to society”. This is partly facilitated through the inclusion of **Local and Global Citizenship** as an area of ‘Learning for Life and Work’. At primary level, this opens up opportunities to build a stronger commitment to human rights values and practices from an early age. At post-primary level, the Local and Global Citizenship curriculum explicitly mentions that pupils should have opportunities to:

“Investigate how and why conflict, including prejudice, stereotyping, sectarianism and racism may arise in the community. Investigate ways of managing conflict and promoting community relations and reconciliation.”

The **citizenship** framework also includes opportunities to examine key human rights commitments and investigate ways of strengthening democratic participation as an alternative to violence.

A range of subject areas also have distinctive contributions to make. For example, the statutory requirements for **History** at Key Stage 3 requires

that pupils aged 11-14 have opportunities to:

“...investigate the long and short term causes and consequences of the partition of Ireland and how it has influenced Northern Ireland today, including key events and turning points.”

Opportunities also exist through the inclusion of texts related to the Troubles as part of the English curriculum. The statutory requirements for **English** and **Media Education** at Key Stage 3 indicate that pupils should have opportunities to:

“...use literature, drama, poetry or the moving image to explore others’ needs and rights, for example, participate in a role play involving conflicting rights.”

The statutory requirements for **Religious Education** in Northern Ireland are drawn up by the four main Christian Churches. However, non-statutory guidance has been developed for RE teachers at Key Stage 3 so that they can see how the Church developed requirements blend with the broader aims, objectives and key elements of the curriculum. These guidelines include recommendations that pupils aged 11-14 have opportunities to:

“...investigate how choices can be influenced by prejudice and sectarianism and ways in which reconciliation can be achieved through dialogue, outreach and action, for example, the churches’ role in peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland or South Africa; religious response to social justice issues in today’s world.”

Meanwhile in the youth work sector (both statutory and voluntary), the 'Model for Effective Practice' is underpinned by the principles of equity, diversity and interdependence and supports meaningful cross-community engagement between young people and a commitment to active citizenship.

Another important educational development in Northern Ireland is a current review of the Department of Education (DE) Community Relations Strategy. This may provide an opportunity to consider new forms of support for schools, teachers and pupils in engaging directly with the legacy of the Troubles and issues related to reconciliation.

A particularly valuable contribution to support for this will be made by the announcement of funding through the European Union's Peace and Reconciliation Programme (PEACE III, Measure 1.2, Strand 1) which invited applications for projects that "explore the legacy and memory of the conflict through truth recovery, documentation, story telling and the recording of complex history and experience". The call indicated that these may include: television and broadcasting materials; interactive web-based resources; archiving; exhibitions; and educational materials, including training and support for teachers, youth workers and community workers.

The Report of the Consultative Group on the Past has highlighted the need for much more widespread debate on dealing with the past in Northern Ireland. It is clear that both formal and informal education have a key role to play. The education authorities need to provide leadership in initiating this debate within the education community.

In light of these overall developments, the following are a number of concrete recommendations.

1. The role of education in dealing with the past and contributing to societal reconciliation should be discussed by the Northern Ireland Assembly Education Committee and a position paper issued for consultation, including consultation with children and young people.
2. This research has highlighted the desire of the children and young people interviewed to learn more about the Troubles and how they might contribute to a more peaceful future. More widespread consultation with children and young people on how this can be achieved in practice needs to take place. This could take the form of more widespread, local consultations through schools and youth groups, perhaps initiated by the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) and/or local youth and children's organisations. These consultations need to engage and involve young people, not only in articulating their views but also in co-creating new ways of dealing with the past and building young people's commitment to human rights principles and practices and democratic values. The views of children and young people on this issue also need to be incorporated into the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister's (OFMDFM) Children and Young People's Strategy.

3. The Department of Education for Northern Ireland should seek the views of school authorities on the role that schools should play in enhancing young people's understanding the Troubles and how they might contribute to a more peaceful future. On the basis of this feedback to this consultation, the Department of Education could issue a Circular with guidance on the expectations from schools.
4. The Department of Education Community Relations Branch might ask every school to consider, based on a common set of questions, the role that they can play in helping young people understand the legacy of the recent past and how they might contribute to a more peaceful future. A summary of their recommendations should be collated and circulated to all schools as guidance.
5. The inclusion of this work within the curriculum has significant implications particularly for teachers and teacher educators. Their views need to be sought in a systematic way, for instance through the recently established General Teaching Council (GTCNI) and/or the teaching trade unions.
6. History teachers need to be consulted about whether or not any further revisions need to take place to the Northern Ireland History curriculum, for example, if there needs to be a specific statutory requirement to focus on the history of the Troubles, even though this is implied in the current requirements.
7. The views of primary teachers should also be sought as to whether history of this kind should be introduced at Key Stage 2.
8. The new Education and Skills Authority (ESA) needs to give thought to the provision of in-service education for teachers. Some teachers have benefited from professional development in relation to the teaching of Local and Global Citizenship. This needs to be refreshed and provision made for helping a wider group of teachers, such as English, History and R.E. teachers to address issues of reconciliation in the classroom.
9. The new ESA will be responsible for providing curriculum support. Television and media have been particularly active in developing user-friendly resources related to Education for Mutual Understanding, History teaching and citizenship education. The Department of Education and the new ESA should continue to be represented on the advisory councils of educational television providers to explore whether new and targeted resources might be required. Similarly, DE and ESA could convene a meeting of educational publishers to consider whether age-appropriate, retrospective texts related to the Troubles need to be developed for use by schools (for example, in the way that the Peruvian authorities have done following the Truth and Reconciliation Commission there).

10. The potentially divisive impact of remembrance and commemoration is of particular concern, particularly within schools with children from diverse social and political backgrounds. Some thought needs to be given to this, as well as to whether field sites, murals, memorials and museums could be educational resources. The potential education role of the proposed Conflict and Reconciliation Centre on the former site of the Maze prison needs to be considered. Thought should be given to its role as a possible field site for schools, residential site or interpretive centre.
11. There may be distinctive concerns amongst those groups representing victims and survivors. These will need to be taken into consideration in bringing any recommendations forward.
12. The views of parents and their expectations of schools in dealing with the Troubles should be sought, for example through a specially commissioned survey or the inclusion of a module in the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey.





9. Appendix: Feedback from Education and Reconciliation Conference

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CONFERENCE FEEDBACK

UNESCO Centre's Education and Reconciliation Conference
La Mon Hotel
3rd September 2008

Are the research findings relevant to your sector (formal education, youth work/informal education, etc.)? If so, how?

Yes! Hearing the voices of young people is an excellent and vital resource to understanding the nature of conflict and its resolution. I do believe that the research groups could have been larger and broader.

Representative, Forgiveness Education Association

Yes: to formal education. There is a need to ensure that children have a grasp of the historical context that produced the events and issues from which reconciliation issues have arisen. Risk-taking is needed within the whole system formal and informal: stakeholders must be encouraged to move forward.

Teacher, Grammar School

My sector is adult/community education. The findings have relevance insofar as they reveal a younger community that my students live in and need to listen to. Listening to younger voices has been a part of our programmes, from time to time.

Representative, I.S.E.

Yes – provides context and learning for training programmes, reconciliation initiatives and design

and delivery of community relations work. Adds to literature of comparative research – will be useful to see gender breakdown of responses/data in the final report.

Representative, Training for Women Network

Yes – working in communities with residents' groups/youth groups etc where these issues are often addressed/raised, and can be explored in safe environment. Shared Neighbourhood Programme is all about good relations and living peacefully together.

Representative, NIHE, Community Cohesion Unit

Yes the Shared Neighbourhood Programme acknowledges that the youth is the new generation. The voice of the future and education/experience of the youth is therefore important.

Representative, NIHE, Community Cohesion

Yes, I am working in a context where there is a lot of segregation in terms of housing. The education at family is the first step but the role of school in this matter is even more important. Making peace involves being willing to show all sides of the same history! (?)

Anonymous

Very relevant – WAVE works with young 'victims' of the 'Troubles'. Dealing with the past and how we pass on knowledge of the past is a concern the organisation struggles with. Would have liked the recommendations to be more precise and broken down into formal/informal.

Representative, WAVE

- Great to see how much the young people's voices were heard today if not visibly here.
- Able to show that young people to have a passion, desire and ability to work forward and together. To look at how
- To look at how we work to provide the best we can for young people's needs.

Representative, NI Children's Enterprise

This is integral to my sector – youth work – and in fact we have, I, have been conscious of this since my first steps in youth work. It is essential that we take a strong lead on this – with authority. There are years of experience and expertise out there. There are/is much intergenerational trauma/experiences that we have a responsibility to help young people deal with this and support them.

Anonymous

Yes. Extremely important that young people whether in formal or non-formal sectors are supported and enabled to participate in a process of reconciliation and that their voices are heard.

Representative, BELB

Yes it is important to enable young people to hear a range of perspectives, including storytelling within the family, in order to diminish generational violence e.g. thirty year cycles of violence in NI.

Representative, Corrymeela

Greater need for reflection in relation to embracing CR programmes and to challenge issues in relation to youth workers' constraints in the delivery of programmes in school – i.e. informal education and formal education, youth

workers can complement each other. Youth workers forum could be suggested to explore development of history programme and dove-tail with formal sector in relation to delivery.

Senior Youth Worker, West Belfast Area Project

Yes as a post primary school teacher and current primary schools worker good to hear research is being done to ask children what they want in N Ireland.

Representative, Corrymeela

Yes. Most of my work is centred around dealing with the past and looking towards a shared future. The research findings give points from young people that I have heard many times before but it is good to see it in a formal document so that funders, policy makers and other stakeholders can take note of their opinions.

Representative, Corrymeela

Yes because the research basis consolidates the key messages of the revised curriculum and complements and gives authority to the work that is going on in history departments in our schools. The research findings will be of great use to move on the intellectual debate in the history community at the moment on the role of teaching history in a post-conflict society.

Representative, SELB

Yes – reinforces need for Mutual Understanding (at primary) and Citizenship (at post primary) and for challenging history teaching 4-16. Education has a role and educators play a role – but are partners with other sectors, parents, community etc. Need to link formal and informal sectors

and use evidence from research to inform and connect work in this area.

Representative, SELB

Formal education – this is critical. Schools need to engage in this work in order to support the development of a more secure and stable society for future citizens.

Anonymous

Yes – largely they support the rationale for our work. Many of the issues raised are being addressed through new curricula etc. But more can be done systemically.

Representative, Public Achievement

All relevant as will inform potential future funding.

Representative, CRC

V relevant for future work and conferences. Perhaps the opportunity for joined-up working is something that should be followed up.

Anonymous

Children's points of views good to hear. In our work the children have similar opinions.

Representative, CRIS

Certainly, but the emphasis now needs to be placed on how it is to be implemented. Policy is inconsistent and lacks commitment by many.

Representative, Community Relations in Schools

Yes, I am involved in the provision of training for teachers working at all levels in schools, including citizenship education.

Representative, BELB

Yes, to a certain degree. It was positive to hear some of the findings which I did not know. But most of our work is centred around those findings, we already implement these type of issues within our CR programmes with young people from 3-18 yrs old.

Representative, Community Relations in Schools

These findings reinforce findings of other research projects in the formal sector e.g. Education for Reconciliation (UU project) and findings gathered from many projects at community and schools level.

Adults and children have expressed desire to know past, to meet 'others'. Some angry at not being taught about the past. Power of the personal story v evident in many situations/projects. Other issues that resonate: political will; continuous funding; and need for training.

Representative, The Junction/Towards Understanding & Healing

Yes, we can use the research findings in our policy work – both on good relations in general and on education.

Representative, NICVA

Yes. It is useful for museums to know that some young people do not feel they have the opportunity to learn about our recent history, and that they find personal testimonies powerful. Both formal and informal education should be open to exploring our past.

Representative, National Museums NI

Yes – helpful to ongoing Review of Community Relations policy.

Representative, DENI

I think the research findings are relevant for both the formal and informal education sectors. I was particularly struck by Alan Smith's short input on truth and how our perspective on that shapes the kinds of programmes/learning opportunities we offer. I think there is work that could be done there with teachers, youth workers and other educators with regard to self-reflection, how they then plan lessons/programmes, etc. The point about children/young people already being aware of some of the values that are needed for reconciliation was also thought-provoking: where do they get those values from? Is that because of work already being done, therefore an affirmation of, e.g. the ethos in classrooms/schools/youth work settings? Or at home? Or is it intuitive?! This may have implications for what might be needed in terms of learning opportunities. However, particularly from a fairly small sample, I am not sure it can be assumed that all children and young people have those values, or fully understand what they look like when they are lived out? Putting them into practice in school and beyond might be a key focus?

Particularly being involved in writing curriculum materials, there are also challenges around when and how to introduce learning opportunities around understanding the recent past. I certainly think it is important to do, and that the different approaches that may be taken in school and in a youth work setting can enrich each other here as elsewhere. I haven't come to any conclusions about this, but if, cognitively,

primary school age is too young (?), then what are the foundations that can be put in place then, that can be built on later?

Anonymous

The research findings are relevant. I found the international comparisons useful.

Establishing political commitment will be a long and frustrating road; subject to the same uncertainties and the ups and downs as the Stormont Assembly. The lobby for commitment to this area must continue.

I would endorse the view that education has a very important role in the development of a more stable society and the need for both formal and non-formal approaches aimed at assisting young people to understand the recent past. Work to secure parental support will be important.

I would caution that references to the need for new approaches do not overlook genuine attempts in both the formal and non-formal sector to move away from mutual understanding models toward more enquiry-based models based on debate and dialogue. There is an important need to engage with those involved in developing these to build on the work undertaken in recent years. Strengthening good models of practice and working in a strategic way to develop and mainstream such work will take time, but this must be the end goal.

Anonymous

Based on what you have heard today, what recommendations (if any) would you make to Northern Ireland policy-makers?

Decide what we want to happen here.
Acknowledge the depth of the problems of NI,
and the comprehensive action needed.
Representative, Forgiveness Education Association

Integrate all education – formal and non-formal
and at all levels.
*PhD student, Academy for Irish Cultural Heritages,
University of Ulster*

KS3 History compulsory unit on post partition N
Ireland should be revised to ... the learning and
teaching of N Ireland c 1967-94. It could
incorporate voices and experiences of the past
from different perspectives – another small step!

Coordinated ... in controversial issues should
continue.

Reconciliation aspects should be addressed at
the primary school age level within all
communities.

Greater encouragement of links with other
countries in conflict situations! Global to local
understanding.
Teacher, Grammar School

A commitment to, more than just an acceptance
of, need for continual education for
reconciliation throughout all sectors.
Representative, I.S.E.

We have committed to a system of power-
sharing to make conflict elites case the violent
conflict, but paradoxically the resulting political
landscape mitigates against reconciliation.
It may be that we have to rely on empowering
civil society to take the lead for reconciliation
initiatives. Deliberative democracy holds some
of the answers.

Representative, Training for Women Network

Needs to be embedded in training of all
educators i.e. teachers, youth workers, comm.
Workers etc. It's not something that can be just
'stuck' into the curriculum or run in some areas –
needs to be across the board and dedication
from DENI, ELB's etc.

Representative, NIHE, Community Cohesion Unit

There needs to be an assessment of what is
being delivered and a strategic plan to
implement consistent joined-up approaches.
Representative, NIHE, Community Cohesion

A real commitment! We all agree in what it is
needed, but who is willing not to win? Are the
policies really reflecting what people want? And
are the policy makers aware of this segregation
in housing and schools when on the other hand
we are talking about peace?

Anonymous

Personally I feel we need to move towards mixed
schooling, where these issues are discussed and
not avoided. If I was visiting NI it would seem
ridiculous to me that we were suggesting
promoting education for a shared future in a
system which is still largely segregated.

Anonymous

Training to link up formal and non-formal trainers.

For this generation to be aware of how they work and not always look at what young people or the 'next' generation should be doing

The importance of intergenerational work and knowledge people already hold

Representative, NI Children's Enterprise

Introduce training into teacher training – make it a integral part of what it is they do – not a tag-on that they have to add to their workload. Help teachers see the 'power' and 'potential' of this work and that is more than just 'reconciliation'.

Anonymous

Need for policy makers to engage with each other in a meaningful manner in order to ensure a consistent approach – which in turn should enable agreed joint strategies and implementation of any policy.

Important to support parents, teachers and youth workers through any process. Sustainability is key to implementation of any policy.

Representative, BELB

Teacher and youth worker training has to be much more duplicated (?) and focused to enable this to happen, and carried out in a collaborative way. It can not be done in isolation of communities and, more importantly, in a way in which decision-making is made in an 'inclusive' way by young people, with and for their schools and communities.

Representative, Corrymeela

Availability of funding. Ongoing training. Explore potential of youth workers and teacher training together to deliver reconciliation programmes to young people in a pilot context. Consider a pilot programme to include parents. *Senior Youth Worker, West Belfast Area Project*

To really take on board research findings that it's time for change!

Representative, Corrymeela

Fund workers for more than 3 year cycles. Workers may have only 'gotten in' and built relationships and trust with teachers/young people etc when funding runs out. Programmes need to have long term sustainability to be of most use.

Representative, Corrymeela

Make links with UNESCO and other educational organisations to facilitate discussions at how we create a values-laden society. How do we get the schools to engage in this debate? How do we support this with training and support?

Representative, SELB

- More shared training and dissemination between formal and informal sectors needed
- Initiate debate about 'truth' and draw on projects such as 'Facing History', SCRIP projects etc
- Build from small steps to shape a pathway for young people
- The leaders of society, schools, organisations don't buy in – little impact and no sustainability
- Willingness to self examine not there in most schools. But schools see their responsibility

differently.

Representative, SELB

- Support schools
- Give us sustained funding/commitment and investment in tomorrow's citizens through effective training for teachers and support for those doing such work
- Our young people deserve the **best**
- Train educators together
- Fund and mainstream cross-sectoral working
- Put more resources into promoting sharing than institutionalising division
- Make Brandon Education Minister!

Representative, Public Achievement

Integrated education essential

- The curriculum requires a change. In 'history' (subject) we should learn our 'own' history.
- Curriculum changes required at Key Stage 2. Children need to learn at this age – or else ignorance will set in and subsequent promulgation of sectarianism and racism.
- Teacher training requires a change or an additional teacher training course in promotion of reconciliation.

Representative, CRC

Change the education system! Segregation needs to stop. If children integrate they have more chance of developing into tolerant human beings.

Anonymous

Joint umbrella for non-formal and formal sectors. Formal sectors (teachers) can be very resistant to non-formal methodologies. Need to work

together to work forward.

Representative, CRIS

Better trained teachers, partnership with informal organisations and a determined place in the curriculum.

Representative, Community Relations in Schools

The recommendation is to introduce peace education into our schools.

There needs to be a debate with influential educators and staff at every level in schools about what should be included in the curriculum – 'politics of knowledge' debate – competing areas wanting to be included in the curriculum e.g. human rights education, education for sustainable development etc, limited time.

I recommend the establishment of a regional citizenship and Ed for Sustainable Development Panel for Northern Ireland (along the lines of the Welsh Assembly model). (The Panel could articulate a common and shared vision of what should be included in an education programme and how this can be implemented.) Peace education should 'sit' within Citizenship education are of the curriculum – it is important to integrate this initiative within an existing initiative – there will be more chance that it will be accepted. School leaders and teachers suffering from 'initiative fatigue'.

It is essential that senior leaders clearly understand the rationale for the inclusion of citizenship in the curriculum and within that, peace education. There is evidence that school leaders do not in many or some cases understand the rationale for the current Local &

Global Citizenship Programme. Where this is the case, they do not give the commitment to ensuring successful implementation.

There needs to be a balance between time spent exploring the past and the need for a futures-focused education which encourages young people to envision society in 2020, or 2050? And how they can shape that society and their future.

We also need to balance the focus on the local context/history/past experience with the important need to equip young people with an understanding and knowledge of the global dimension – 1 in 4 jobs in the UK is related to the global economy.

Education should ‘open up the minds of young people’. Given the many issues in our society, I believe education should be values-based, we need to teach young people about respect, integrity, fairness etc.

Representative, BELB

Barriers broke down between teachers and youth workers/CR workers, if what we want is to be centred around the children then how are we going to implement this within education if our resources are not being used to fulfil our children’s education/personal development.

Representative, Community Relations in Schools

Duncan hit the nail on the head – let’s get on with it. Is there real across the board political will? If support doesn’t come from the top of govt and all institutions involved nothing much will happen. Considerable resources were initially given to citizenship roll-out. Is this being

continued re training (especially) and money? Heavy investment in training needed as this is sensitive work.

Intergenerational learning v important. Is there a way to effectively engage with parents and boards of governors? The Basque drama project was v interesting – always a good way to address difficult issues. It was helpful to hear the international experiences.

Dealing with our past should be statutory in the curriculum there should not be choices that allow an opt-out.

It would be very helpful to have an audit of all the various initiatives and programmes that have contributed to dealing with the past, reconciliation, etc. I think someone in INCORE started doing this a few years ago. There needs to be better coordination in this field. There have been so many good projects. But funding is always a problem – it would be a shame to lose the expertise and learning that has been built up in these.

The task needs to be undertaken at formal and informal levels. School level provides opportunity to reach the widest number – and also to challenge the myths that may be handed down in the home!!

Multiple perspectives can be addressed through storytelling. This could be personal stories or stories specially chosen to reflect different perspectives. The former requires very careful preparatory work and ground rules, but is very powerful and rewarding. It has fantastic potential for change and the rehumanisation of ‘the other’.

It would be very useful for teachers to go through this process themselves – both at training and in-service levels. It could be transformative for our politicians also!

Politicians! Actively support a shared future. Churches also have something to contribute.

Representative, The Junction/Towards Understanding & Healing

Bring forward a comprehensive NI strategy to replace a Shared Future immediately and resource it appropriately. Training teachers effectively to engage in discussions on the past and living together in a diverse society as a core part of the formal education system.

Representative, NICVA

It would be helpful if elected representatives, among others, recognised the validity of multiple perspectives, and had a clearer understanding themselves of the complexities of ‘historical truth’.

Representative, National Museums NI

I was struck by the comments from youth workers about the difficulties in working with most of the schools in their experience. That has been my experience too. However, I also sit on a Board of Governors where over a period of months the principal can receive, 20, 30, even 50 letters, circulars, etc. from the ELB, the Department, etc. These can be to do with everything from curriculum changes to policy updates, to changes in the way support staff are employed, etc., etc. More than half of these also have implications for the day-to-day work of classroom teachers. I think it is extremely difficult for principals, senior management and

teachers to prioritise community relations/EDI/reconciliation/etc. in the midst of all these demands on their time and energy, particularly when some of the other things seem to be regarded as more urgent or of higher priority by the Department and the ELB. If reconciliation and related themes are important, then the Department needs to take a clear lead and send a clear message about priorities which gives school staff freedom to focus on the themes at their local level. This may mean not doing some other things, so choices have to be made and at least some of these need to be made at Department level in order for school staff to feel that they have “permission” to do so.

Another aspect that strikes me from listening to the youth workers, and something that was discussed a bit at the conference, was the need for opportunities for youth workers and teachers to do some reflective learning together and to work together as partners. My experience has been that there can be a lot of talk about how much youth workers can share with teachers in terms of skills and ways of working, but not necessarily the other way round. I am not sure that this is helpful, because I think, as youth workers, we can also learn a lot from teachers’ experience and skills, as well as maybe understanding better the restrictions and pressures of multiple, sometimes conflicting, demands as to what their role is about within which they sometimes work.

Anonymous

There is an important need to legitimise the role for youth work and formal education in this field and to begin to work toward mainstreaming,

while at the same time growing models of good practice.

There is a need to establish realistic and achievable evaluation models against which practitioners can measure success, and, linked to this, a need for the work to be valued as an essential element of civil society – rather than constantly having to prove itself against unrealistic expectations.

Anonymous

Any other comments

Well done on the conference!

Representative, Forgiveness Education Assoc

Really interesting piece of research. Looking forward to the final report.

Representative, Training for Women Network

V interesting conference – enjoyed the global aspect as well as the local.

Representative, NIHE, Community Cohesion Unit

Well done to UNESCO on an excellent conference. Would have appreciated more time for interaction, but the conference was rich with interesting speakers so I know finding time for this was difficult.

Representative, WAVE

Great to have this work highlighted and bring people from different sectors. Great to have young people at the tables also. Good to see how young people want to learn about their country but ability to (?) outside the box also.

Representative, NI Children's Enterprise

Thank you for a very informative and engaging conference. Look forward to reading final document.

Representative, BELB

Perhaps the day's programme could have been a bit more interactive.

Representative, Corrymeela

A very positive experience. Great opportunity to establish potential links with representatives from diverse backgrounds and cultures. Thank you.

Senior Youth Worker, West Belfast Area Project

We will never ever get full parental support but most things in the educational system do not have parental support, so we must do it anyway. We need to provide children with two sides of a story and allow them to make up their own minds.

Representative, Corrymeela

This conference facilitated some good discussions but highlighted the need to move from talking stage to the action stage. This can only be done when key people in formal, informal education, political and community leaders work together to have a shared understanding of our values and beliefs.

Representative, SELB

Would have liked more of Duncan Morrow and more inter-active dialogue – less presentations but appreciated and was interested by the information presented today.

Representative, SELB

Excellent day. Very thought provoking. Good opportunity to gain a variety of perspectives.

Anonymous

Ask when the views of young people are going to be taken seriously.

Fewer pilots, more mainstreaming.

Representative, Public Achievement

Very informative conference. Thank you and congratulations.

Representative, CRC

Good, thought-provoking event.

Anonymous

It was very interesting to hear of experiences from other countries. Excellent input from Duncan Morrow.

Representative, BELB

I found today beneficial to my work in terms of how, when and why do we integrate 'the Troubles'/'the past' into education. I feel maybe more time to share our thoughts with other service-users, more discussions.

Representative, Community Relations in Schools

It was an excellent conference – I was only able to stay for the morning but found it very informative. Look forward to seeing the research when complete.

Representative, NICVA

I found the lack of context for the comments problematic, e.g. when discussing issues with young people as young as 11 there are questions about how much their views on wider issues are a reflection of those of their parents (the language of some of the comments suggest this); and it would be interesting to know which of any of the many initiatives, (such as cross-community contact schemes, or studying the 1965-85 period on History GCSE), these young people had experience of, and what impact those things had on their attitudes.

Representative, National Museums NI

Excellent and timely event.

Representative, DENI

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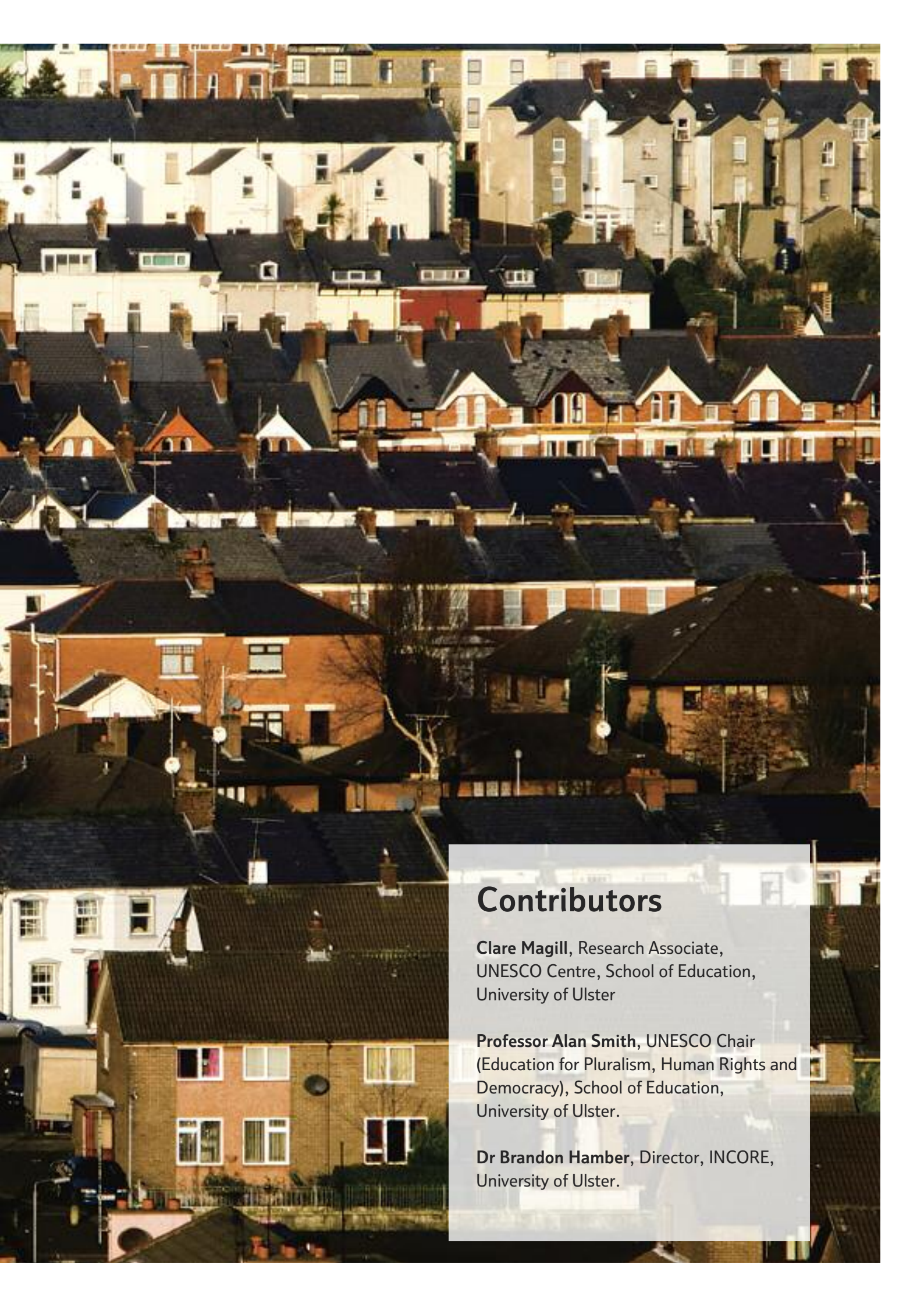
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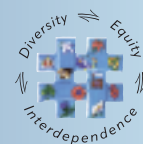
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